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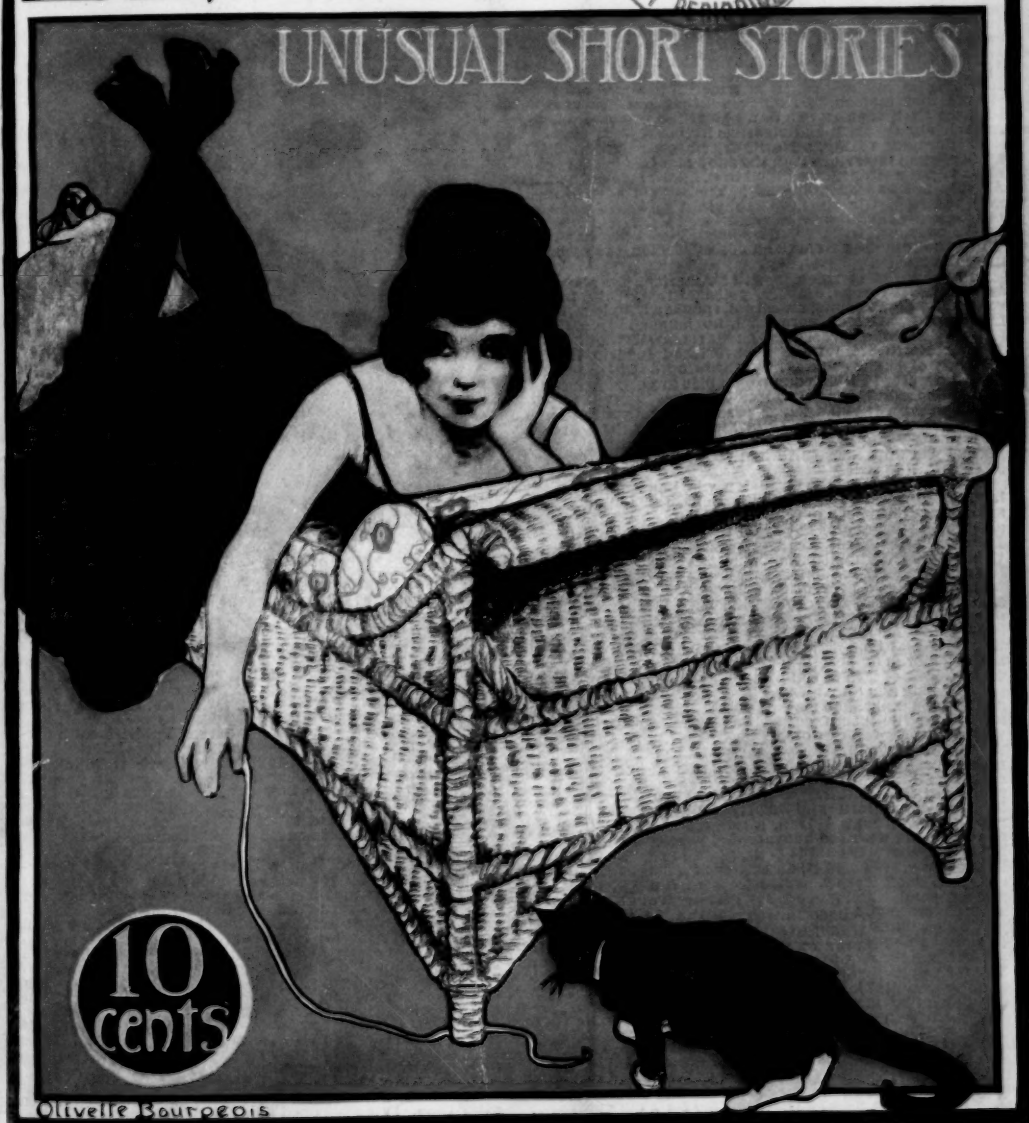

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Dr. Ferdinand King, a New York physician and medical author, when interviewed on the subject, said: "There can be no vigorous iron men without iron. Pallor means anemia. Anemia means iron deficiency. The skin of anemic men and women is pale, the flesh flabby, the muscles lack tone; the brain fags and the memory fails and often they become weak, nervous, irritable, despondent, and melancholy. When the iron goes from the blood of women, the roses go from their cheeks.

"In the most common foods of America, the starches, sugars, table syrups, candies, polished rice, white bread, soda crackers, biscuits, macaroni, spaghetti, tapioca, sago, farina, degerminated corn-meal, no longer is iron to be found. Refining processes have removed the iron of Mother Earth from these impoverished foods, and silly methods of home cookery, by throwing down the waste pipe the water in which our vegetables are cooked, are responsible for another grave iron loss.

"Therefore, if you wish to preserve your youthful vim and vigor to a ripe old age, you must supply the iron deficiency in your food by using some form of organic iron, just as you would use salt when your food has not enough salt."

Dr. E. Sauer, a Boston physician, who has studied abroad in great European medical institutions, said: "As I have said a hundred times over, organic iron is the greatest of all strength builders. If people would only take Nuxated Iron when they feel weak or rundown, instead of dosing themselves with habit-forming drugs, stimulants and alcoholic beverages I am convinced that in this way they could ward off disease, preventing it becoming organic in thousands of cases and thereby the lives of thousands might be saved who now die every year from pneumonia, grippe, kidney, liver, heart trouble and other dangerous maladies. The real and true cause which started their disease was nothing more nor less than a weakened condition brought on by a lack of iron in the blood.

"Not long ago a man came to me who was nearly half a century old and asked me to give him a preliminary examination for life insurance. I was astonished to find him with a blood pressure of a boy of twenty and as full of vigor, vim and vitality as a young man; in fact, a young man he really was, notwithstanding his age. The secret, he said, was taking iron—Nuxated Iron had filled him with renewed life. At thirty he was in bad health; at forty-six he was care worn and nearly all in. Now, at fifty, after taking Nuxated Iron, a miracle of vitality and his face beaming with the buoyancy of youth. Iron is absolutely necessary to enable your blood to change food into living tissue. Without it, no matter how much or what you eat, your food merely passes through you without doing you any good. You don't get the strength out of it, and as a consequence you become weak, pale and sickly looking, just like a plant trying to grow in a soil deficient in iron. If you are not strong or well, you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of ordinary nuxated iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see how much you have gained. I have seen dozens of nervous, run-down people who were ailing all the while double their strength and endurance, and entirely rid themselves of all symptoms of dyspepsia, liver and other troubles in from ten to fourteen days' time simply by taking iron in the proper form. And this, after they had in some cases been doctoring for months without obtaining any benefit. But don't take the old forms of reduced iron, iron acetate, or tincture of iron simply to save a few cents. The iron demanded by Mother Nature for the red coloring matter in the blood of her children is, alas! not that kind of iron. You must take iron in a form that can be easily absorbed and assimilated to do you any good, otherwise it may prove worse than useless. Many an athlete and prize-fighter has won the day simply because he knew the secret of great strength and endurance and filled his blood with iron before he went into the affray; while many another has gone down in inglorious defeat simply for the lack of iron."

Dr. James, late of the United States Public Health Service, says: "Patients in an enervated and devitalized state of health—those, for instance, convalescing from protracted fevers, those suffering from a long-standing case of anemia, all such people, in my opinion, need iron. Of late, there has been brought to my attention, Nuxated Iron. In practice, I have found this an ideal restorative and upbuilding agent in these cases above mentioned."

NOTE—Nuxated Iron, which is prescribed and recommended above by physicians in such a great variety of cases, is not a patent medicine or secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists and whose iron constituents are widely prescribed by eminent physicians both in Europe and America. Unlike the older inorganic iron products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black, nor upset the stomach; on the contrary, it is a most potent remedy in nearly all forms of indigestion as well as for nervous, run-down conditions. The manufacturers have such great confidence in nuxated iron that they offer to forfeit $100.00 to any charitable institution if they cannot take any man or woman under 60 who lacks iron, and increase their strength 100 per cent. or over in four weeks' time, provided they have no serious organic trouble. They also offer to refund your money if it does not at least double your strength and endurance in ten days' time. It is dispensed by all good druggists.

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The Black Cat

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What Our Readers Say About Us

EVERY time we refer to the *Kipling Index*, we are informed that a sub-editor is hired to sub-edit, not to rewrite the Essays of Elia. Now it happens that we have an editor whom we call the Consulting Editor. He is sometimes known as the Reading Public, and it is his privilege to indulge in the luxury of essay writing. One would think that he might turn out some pretty good stuff. But he doesn't. His work is not Lamblike, it is not like that of the critical essayists, it is not like anything. He simply cannot write a composite essay in criticism without contradicting himself. He says that a story is good in one breath and bad in the next. For example, after stating that a story is "a breezy, realistic piece of fiction," he makes a marginal note to the effect that "it is pointless, plotless, stupid and tiresome. Even editing by Woodrow Wilson or Charles W. Eliot could never redeem it from its hopeless mediocrity." He damns with the faintness of his praise and glorifies with the inelegance of his abuse, all within ten lines; but we love him just the same. It is surprising how much he knows about short story technique. He knows so much that we are sometimes tempted to ask him if he ever fools around that buzz-saw known as the Correspondence School. If he does, perhaps that is what makes him stand head and shoulders above those "superficially, sentimental folk who are easily influenced by what they read, and who find, in letters to editors, an outlet for their overwrought emotions."

Having censored his remarks somewhat, we present his opinion of the February stories, beginning with the prize story, *Slicks and Slickers* by George Thomas Armitage.

This story is impressionistic, with objective treatment, the photographer's view. There is plenty of action, but it is the sort of action that might take place at a track meet or circus. The dramatic action which makes literature is lacking. The author's frenzied, frantic, style is wearisome. Still, I predict that this writer who has made such a "glorious failure" will rank far above the other contributors when he has learned to let us know the point of the story early and keep us worried about it until the end.

The Acquital of Dr. Guidas is gruesome without being clever. It loses force because it is a "told" story; and the failure of the author to account for the disappearance of the head is unsatisfactory and marks the story as lacking in development. It leaves, however, a unified impression; and seems to have been written from an excellent recipe: "Take one silent doctor and a headless body, stir them into a handful of narrow, gossiping villagers, spice with a graveyard at midnight and a red cloak."

The Fairy Wand is good considering that it is handicapped by a more or less threadbare setting. We recognize all the boarding house inmates; but the characterization is largely caricature, which explains perhaps why so few of us have ever sat at a table with such a quintessence of typical personalities.

Getting It arouses the interest with the very first paragraph, and the second carries one well into the story and gives the key to the situation. The action is cumulative. The two motives, the captain's need of guns to get money and his need of money to get guns, are artistically interwoven. The captain himself is a clearly drawn character, and the reader is prepared for his unethical behavior in augmenting his exchequer. If there is any fault to be found, it is that the story strains the credulity in one or two places, as for instance, where the envelop in which the money was received is carelessly thrown away and is not discovered by either the police or the delegation of cloak, suit and tie makers who "snooped with a frenzied diligence in all corners." For the student of the short story who has to illustrate the technique paragraphically for his finger exercises, there is nothing better than this one.

About *Tante's Valentine* there is the scent of lavender and old rose, with the pleasing contrast of the morning glare and the sunset glow of love's old sweet story. It is necessary to dodge the obtruding figure of a garrulous school-girl in order to see the principals of this story clearly.

(*Continued on page 45*)

THANKS TO THE CAPE COD FIN

BY CHARLES BOARDMAN HAWES

Emerson made one great rule for the guidance of humorists. "One has," says he, "but to remove an object from its environment and instantly it becomes comic." This story follows that rule, except that there are three objects and the result of their change comes near to being tragic.

THE Cape Cod Finn was responsible for the strangest adventure that ever befell three of the best axemen in all the Abol River Valley.

He came to Abol the winter after Wally MacDougald had achieved immortal fame by winning the gold medal for playing jigs and reels in the grand competition of pipers at the Scotch picnic in Boston; but having spent fourteen years before the mast, and being fully imbued with the glories of the sea, he was inclined to shrug his shoulders scornfully when any one spoke of what a fine thing it was to have a job with a man like MacLaren, and every evening he told such tall stories of mariners and ships that Wally MacDougald and Farquhar Stevenson and Danny Logue became discontented with the camps and asked him if there were not more of a chance at sea to better themselves.

"It is a fine life, a fine life," the Finn declared. "A fine life for a likely lad." But his eyes twinkled. The Finn was a shameless humorist.

At first the talk of going to sea was a joke; soon the three were considering it seriously; in a week they had become so enthusiastic that they could think of nothing else, and in two weeks every man in camp was calling them "the three old salts."

The Finn, however, had had experience with the "glories" of which he spoke so glibly, and with his scorn for the inland life was mingled a certain involuntary content. As he ate MacLaren's good grub and figured up the wages that were due him he gazed at the smoky rafters and smiled a sad smile behind which danced an unhallowed mirth.

In the fullness of time, the drive swept down to the boom and the crews went forth on the rampage. From the Columbia Hotel to the Brewer Bridge one could not pass two lamp-posts that were not held up by MacLaren's men. Barney Osborn hocked his brad-boots and went to the Exchange Street Station to try to beat down the price of a round-trip ticket to Passadumkeag; Ole Hardenson wandered up on Main Street and bargained half his accumulated wages for a second-hand violin; everywhere there was a grand time in progress. But Wally MacDougald, Danny Logue and Farquhar Stevenson, having deserted the crowd and gone off by themselves, picked their way through the mud to the end of an Exchange Street alley and peeked round the corner of an old shed at a short, fat man with a sad, sour face, who was sitting in a rocking chair on the deck of a lumber-laden schooner.

"I do think he's the very man," whispered Danny Logue.

"Weel, then, have it over with," replied Wally, and stepped out from the corner of the shed, thereby, although no one knew it at the time, preparing the way for the future astonishment of the captain of the tugboat *Push and Pull*, himself a worthy and patriotic Scotchman, who, at that moment, was two hundred miles away and had never heard of any one of the three.

They crossed the dock and stepped from the blackened timber that overhung the dark water of the Kenduskeag, to the deck of the little schooner. The man in the rocking chair raised his eyes and took his pipe from his mouth but said nothing.

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"Captain Nelson of the *Elmira Hawkes?*" asked Wally boldly.

The fat man spat over the side and cleared his throat. "That's me," he said in a squeally voice.

Wally glanced up at the old gray post-office and the long brown wharves before continuing. "Hum, hum," he groaned, being somewhat embarrassed, then as neither Farquhar nor Danny said anything, he plunged boldly into the subject in hand. "Mr. Nelson, here's three handy lads as can handle an axe, run logs or drive hosses. We don't know nothin' 'bout ships an' such like, but we wants to go to sea a spell, seein' there ain't no crews goin' into the woods this time of year, an' we was especially recommended to you by a mutual friend of ourn. If you can give us a job, we'll work hard and serve you faithful."

Wally stopped and stared at Captain Nautical Nelson. On his face expanded a most peculiar expression that was intensified by a broad grin. There was a strange light in the man's small, closely-set eyes that seemed to be in imminent danger of running into each other, even as his black eyebrows ran into each other on the summit of his nose.

Captain Nautical Nelson gulped, knocked the ashes from his pipe into the stream and held out his hand. "Ye're fine, hearty lads," he cried. "The' ain't much to do jes' sailin' the *Elmira Hawkes*, an' I can't pay ye much, but I'll give ye your keep, an' sav—" he paused and eyed them dubiously,—"four dollars a month!"

"Not much!" Danny Logue muttered.

Nautical Nelson turned quickly and looked at Danny's broad shoulders. "Make it five!" he snapped.

"Not on your—"

"Sh," whispered Farquhar, "it's only a lark! Come the end of the month we'll all be back in Bangor and hire out with MacLaren."

"Well, perhaps—" Danny began.

"Where's your crew, Cap'n Nelson?" asked Wally suddenly.

The captain flushed and avoided the keen eyes that were turned upon him. "They er—they was took sick," he said in a low, sad voice, then as a new idea seemed to strike him he continued more briskly, "'twas the Bangor water—it's pizen."

Wally looked at the others. Farquhar grinned and Danny nodded. "All right," Wally cried. "We're with you, but for a month only."

Captain Nautical Nelson gripped Wally's outstretched hand and glanced apprehensively at the shore, but no one was in sight. "Come below, lads," he whispered hoarsely. "Come below and sign up. Oh, it's a fine v'y'ge we'll have—a fine v'y'ge!"

He limped clumsily off to the little deck house and climbed even more clumsily down the short ladder. In single file, Wally MacDougald, Farquhar Stevenson and Danny Logue followed him out of sight into the dark hole that was complimented by the name of cabin. The sadness and sourness had mysteriously disappeared from the face of Nautical Nelson.

When the three new sailors came back to the Riverside Hotel for their dunnage there were twenty men to meet them.

"Yes," Wally said, in reply to the loud questions that were thrown at him from all sides, "yes, we all got jobs—great luck—signed up with Cap'n Nelson of the *Elmira Hawkes*, just like the Cape Cod Finn told us. Nope, he hadn't any crew—they was took sick on account of Bangor water. So long, we've got to hustle. Cap'n Nelson didn't want us even to come ashore for our bags. So long!"

Until the triumvirate had turned the corner of Exchange Street not a man smiled, but when they had disappeared a thunder-burst of laughter shook the grim old hostelry. Men laughed till their sides ached and their heads dropped on their folded arms.

Out of the little hotel office reeled the Cape Cod Finn. "Thanks to me!" he gasped. "Thanks to me! Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord! I've seen 'em easy, I've seen 'em soft, but when it comes to your leetle green lobsters a-racin' fer the trap, give me a blue-nosed lumberjack sniffin' salt water!"

When the drawbridge at the mouth of the Kenduskeag stream slowly opened and

a snorting little tug drew the *Elmira Hawkes* into the main river where a flood tide and a fair wind waited to waft her down to the sea, a hundred lumberjacks were seated along the sleepers of the railroad bridge and along the rotting piles that lined the riverbank, to wave farewell to Wally, and Danny, and Farquhar Stevenson.

"What," growled Danny, "are they laffin' at!"

Neither Wally nor Farquhar answered the question, but Captain Nautical Nelson hid his face.

The *Elmira Hawkes's* patched sails filled in the brisk wind that was blowing down the Penobscot. Her ropes creaked in the blocks and her squat bow lunged ahead, plowing up a mound of gray-brown foam. Nautical Nelson stood at the wheel and under knit brows surveyed now the impudent little ferry boat that chugged away off the port bow, now the gray icehouses and the tall church spires of Brewer.

"The pipes, lad, get out the pipes!" whispered Farquhar.

Up in the bow of the schooner, behind a huge pile of shingles, Wally MacDougald unwrapped his bagpipes, while Farquhar Stevenson clicked his heels together in eagerness to dance. The blare of the tuning drowned out all other sounds so that not one of the three was aware of a hoarse voice that bellowed furiously, nor heard catlike steps approaching on the deck. As Wally filled the bag and let his fingers fall across the chanter, a shadow darkened the shingles; as the first notes of "The Cock o' the North" wailed loudly, a hard hand was laid on Wally's shoulder.

Wally took his fingers from the chanter and high G was blended with the melodious hum of the drones. Over him stood Skipper Nautical Nelson. Nautical Nelson appeared to be a fat man, but there was solid bone and muscle to his huge body, and his double chin had a mournful unhappy droop. In his eyes was a curious expression, catlike and unpleasant, strangely unlike the oily smirk with which he had greeted them early in the day.

"Can't have it," he said angrily. "Music is an abomination, an' that screechin', caterwaulin' windbag thing you've got there is a special abomination o' the Devil."

"Well," said Danny Logue, sticking his thumbs under his suspenders, "what *can* we do to pass the time?"

"Do?" quavered Skipper Nelson in a tone that implied that he had not heard aright. "Do to pass the time?" He gasped for breath. "Lay for'ards an' fetch them shingles amidships!"

The three looked at each other and then at Captain Nelson, whose face was changing from crimson to purple. He spoke again more slowly but more harshly, and his small eyes seemed to become narrower and closer together. "Lay for'ard—an' fetch—them *shingles*—amidships! Bagpipes! Jehoshaphat!"

The light went out of Farquhar Stevenson's eyes. Danny's face grew long and sad, and Wally stared in unbelief: the first great dream was shattered; even at sea hard work confronted them.

When Nautical Nelson saw them piling shingles with a will, he gripped the wheel with both hands and watched the yellow bulk of High Head glide slowly by. When after an hour's brisk labor the shingles were ranged along the cabin, he cleared his throat loudly.

"Them's too high up," he yelled. "Pile them two top layers for'ards again!"

Another hour passed slowly.

"Now," cried Skipper Nelson, "we've got to clean up a bit. Bangor's a dirty place an' dirt's contagious. MacDougald, he can rub up the paint; Stevenson, he can holystone the deck, an'—le's see—le's see—Logue, he can go below an' clean the cabin—it's awful dirty from the crew I had comin' up river."

The *Elmira Hawkes* was one of those small coastwise craft on which captain and crew occupy the cabin together in peaceful disregard for the etiquette that governs more pretentious vessels.

Captain Nelson leaned against the wheel, smoking his brown clay pipe, and watched them with calculating eyes. He was pleased to see them work; he was always pleased to see people work on board

the *Elmira Hawkes;* it was said that he would spill lampblack on the deck so that his men, when they had nothing else to do, could clean it up; some went so far as to say that he had cut his own mainsheet in a calm so that his men could splice it.

"Bag-pipes! Jehoshaphat!" he muttered. In all the world there was nothing that he detested so utterly and so completely as the drone of the Scottish pipes. There was a reason for it, too, but the reason could only be found in the closed book of Nautical Nelson's past.

As the day wore on apace the *Elmira Hawkes* plowed down the river. Hamden, and Orrington, and Winterport loomed up in turn. The gray walls of Fort Knox, over which peered her antiquated cannon, rose beyond the river's bend and fell far astern. After a long time, the lights began to twinkle in the farmhouses that perched on the high banks and Captain Nelson nodded at the wheel. But as the day wore on, the three grew angrier and angrier. When night fell, and their empty bellies called for food, Wally and Farquhar began to talk in low tones that did not carry to the skipper's ears.

"Five dollars a month he's paying us!" muttered Farquhar.

"Well, I'm no' the one that made all the talk about a sailor's life an' ridin' 'round on ships with nothin' to do!"

For a time they scrubbed in silence.

"Now I wonder what Danny'll be doin'!" said Farquhar thoughtfully.

Wally made no reply.

The well-scoured deck was shining in the light of the sunset. The hills on the skyline were fringed with pointed firs and spruces. The two sat in the shelter of the shingle pile and gazed long and peacefully at the swiftly fading western light. But from Danny there was neither sign nor sound.

The schooner was a small craft. From somewhere aft came a low buzzing sound that rose gradually to considerable volume and died away in an audible gasp. Wally looked at Farquhar and grinned more broadly. Again and again that strange sound was repeated. It grew louder with every repetition. Wally held his hand before his mouth and whispered, "It's Danny! He's snorin'!"

Abaft the shingle pile, Nautical Nelson scratched his head "Where's that steamer that's bellerin' so?" he called out.

Wally and Farquhar, bending over their work to conceal their laughter, were unable to speak.

"Well," the old man grumbled crustily, "let 'er bellow! I'm agoin' b'low and set out the grub! MacDougald, take the wheel an' hold her about two points west o' that little yeller light!"

Nautical Nelson paused on the ladder. He peered down into the cabin and saw a strange sight. His chin expanded, his eyes dilated. "May I be swigged!" he gasped.

He climbed on deck in clumsy haste, selected a bit of stout rope with a large knot at the end of it, tiptoed back to the companionway and with catlike silence and a celerity seemingly incongruous with his vast bulk disappeared into the dark cabin.

As another long snore shook the air and the crescendo of a second began bravely, the two listeners on deck heard a rope swish through the air and land with a sharp crack. The crescendo was broken off by a wild yell. The rope whistled and cracked. A loud and angry voice roared hoarse reply to Nautical Nelson's wheezing tirade. There was the sound of running and racing and crashing and smashing and tumbling and banging down there in the darkness of the little cabin.

"You lumpin', lazy, lag-jawed, bat-eyed son of a down-east seacook!" Nautical Nelson yelled. "You thick-headed, lobster-backed, barnacle-brained scum of the clam-flats! You flounderin' human mudscow! You gallivantin' Mahon scullion! You club-footed bag-piper!" Constantly Nautical Nelson harked back to the detested bagpipes, for his was a mean soul with no love of music.

With a wild yell, Danny Logue broke from the cabin and leaped to the deck. A tin plate whistled by his head, flew over the rail, splashed and sank.

The voice below stopped and a lantern flickered; the *Elmira Hawkes* had turned from her course and the yellow light lay off the port quarter. The two noticed it

at that very moment that Danny Logue came tumbling up on deck. Their one thought was to bring the yellow light once more beyond the bowsprit.

"Turn her round quick!" Farquhar cried, gripping the wheel. "Which way do we spin it?"

Already Captain Nelson's feet could be heard on the companionway.

The breeze was increasing and long waves were lapping against the hull of the *Elmira Hawkes*. Realizing only that she must be brought about, Wally and Farquhar, in serene ignorance of nautical affairs, threw the wheel hard over. The schooner swung slowly off. Then came the unforeseen.

Squarely, fairly, without sign or warning, the *Elmira Hawkes* jibed treacherously! Her booms swept the deck. Her sheets tightened with a report like the crack of a musket. Her sails filled and jerked against her mast. The rotten boltline on her ancient foresail gave way and the canvas was torn in a screaming rip. For a moment she lay nearly on beam end, then, slowly righting herself, she headed once more at the yellow light. But her deckload of lumber was floating in the cold water of Penobscot Bay and Danny Logue was nowhere to be seen.

"Where's Danny?" Wally cried.

The two stared into the black water to leeward.

"Danny, Danny! Speak, Danny, and we'll throw you a line!"

There was no answer.

Behind them, through the companionway, a large round head with double chin was thrust into the open air. Neither noticed it because the lantern had been smashed and the cabin was dark, but the voice that followed it demanded attention, for Nautical Nelson never lacked words wherewith to express emotion. "Sometimes they're wuthless—sometimes they're useless, sometimes they're destructive," he bellowed when he saw the stripped decks, "but of all the confounded, slamguzzled, sink-brained idjuts."

He paused, realizing for the first time the extent of the damage that had been done. There were no shingles piled amidships, there were no clapboards piled aft. A few joists still rested by the lee scuppers, and that was all. The deck-load was overboard and the black waters of the bay were slapping the side of the *Elmira Hawkes* as if hungry for more.

Like the comb of a turkey gobler, Nautical Nelson's double chin crimsoned and swelled; his brow knotted; the purple of his nose deepened. He looked at the two men who had left the wheel and were leaning over the ornate taffrail that decked the *Elmira Hawkes's* stern, calling into the black night, "Danny! Danny! Where are you, Danny?"

Nautical Nelson was known from Eastport, Maine, to Provincetown, as the most consistently ill-natured man on the New England coast. Now that he had reason to be angry, instead of shouting and cursing and stamping and bawling like other men, he spoke to himself, sadly, in a low voice, as if to reinforce his determination. "They've lost my deck-load," he said. "They've drownded one of my crew; I'll finish 'em, that's what I'll do." He picked up a short piece of four by five timber, and crept along the deck toward the two, who were calling in vain to the missing third of the triumvirate.

Ignoring the responsibility that he himself had incurred by putting two green men at the wheel, he rose on his tiptoes behind Wally MacDougald and swinging the bit of timber through the air, brought it down with all his might at Wally's head. At that moment, however, a little squall danced into the mainsail and the *Elmira Hawkes* heeled before the gust. The blow missed Wally altogether and struck Farquhar Stevenson's hand on the rail.

Springing back with a yell, Farquhar looked into Nautical Nelson's eyes. Captain Nelson, always a man of wrath, had never been so angry as at that moment.

Like a flash, the skipper raised his club to strike again, and Farquhar lunged in under his guard, caught him round the waist, although his arms could scarcely encompass the huge body, and heaved mightily. But Nelson, lazy and indolent though he seemed, had worked long and hard in his younger years and his great

bulk concealed strong muscles and wiry sinews. Farquhar, his hold broken, was flung his length on the deck.

As Nelson again swung his four by five club in the air, Wally leaped at his throat, and clung there with all his might and main. The big man's eyes flashed. His huge, pudgy hands clutched the little Scotchman's locked fingers and slowly forcing them apart he thrust MacDougal back on Farquhar's unconscious body.

Wally flung himself hard to the left, turned in the clutch of Nelson's two hands, and spun on his head like the featherweight wrestler that he was, but to no avail. Farquhar moved and groaned but one of the skipper's great hands held him in a relentless grasp. With his other, he drew a keen-pointed dirk and raised it with demoniacal fury.

The *Elmira Hawkes* was sailing of her own will. Her wheel turned listlessly this way and that, as she veered with the wind. Her split foresail flapped idly in long tatters, but her mainsail bellied full. Round in a great circle she swept, through the dark sea over which distant lights were glimmering, till jibs and mainsail flapped loosely in the head wind. She was carried along by her momentum till the sails filled again, then she heeled to port and swung on another tack. She had returned, unknown to the two who were fighting on her deck, to the very spot where she had jibed and split her foresail.

She bumped against floating joists and shingles, and clinging to one of these bundles of shingles was a man who watched the schooner with the split foresail loom out of the night until he was struck by her broad bows and knocked under water. He came up amidships, gasping, thrust out one broad hand, clutched the rail, and hauled himself up.

While he balanced himself by the stays, he saw by the light of the schooner's lantern the little group lying in the shelter of the cabin; he saw Nautical Nelson's huge bull neck swelling under his dirty collar; he saw the gleam of the drawn knife.

Danny Logue crouched on the rail, then sprang through the air, caught Nelson by the neck and crotch, lifted his two hundred and twenty pounds clear of the deck, took just three whirling steps and hurled the skipper headlong into the dark cabin. Nelson fell with a wild yell and thudded at the foot of the companionway in a crumpled heap. Getting on his feet, he clutched a carving knife and sprang up the companionway, but he looked into a pair of eyes the blaze of which dimmed his own. He saw silhouetted against the sky a great, sledgehammer fist, and heard a terrible voice roar, "Come out like a man, yez inglorious apology for a shcoundrel, and I'll maul ye till ye wish ye was borned a choppin' block fer the relief that ye'd git by it!"

Nautical Nelson resisted his murderous impulse and retreated. He saw the light cut off and heard many timbers being piled on the hatch. Very cautiously he crossed the cabin and tried to force his way out but found to his chagrin that he was a prisoner on his own ship.

Wally helped Danny pile lumber over the cabin, and before the companionway was entirely buried, Farquhar Stevenson sat up, rubbed his head and asked what had happened.

"The boat sets funny," said Farquhar, when half the lumber in the hold had been transferred aft as an additional barricade, and the schooner was riding with the bow well in the air. "She sets funny an' we can't sail her. We'd better take down what's left of them sails."

They cut the halyards, and mainsail and jib came fluttering down.

There off Islesboro, with only the tattered foresail to rattle in the breeze, the *Elmira Hawkes* drifted at the mercy of wind and tide.

"Now," said Danny, with a strange twinkle in his eyes, "now for revenge!"

Revenge! There was one thing that Nautical Nelson abhorred above all else, and what that thing was each of the three amateur seamen knew well.

Hours later the tug boat, *Push and Pull*, was churning its way up-river in the deeper darkness that precedes dawn.

"Them lights is actin' funny!" said her skipper.

"Hark!" said her mate, "what in the name o' mischief is that?"

Over the water came an eery sound that cut the mist like the scream of a siren horn. The skipper's ears, trained in the wild minor of his native Scotland, detected melody. "It's the pipes, man," he cried, "playin' 'Cock o' the North'! Put down your helm!"

As the tug chugged over the gray sea to the drifting schooner, the first light of dawn broke in the east and revealed on the deck of that craft of strange behavior the shadow-like shape of a leaping man.

"What's he doin'?" asked the mate.

"He's dancin' the Highland Fling!" cried the skipper.

When Nautical Nelson heard the timbers drawn from above him, he stormed up the companionway and blinked at the lights of the tug and at the dancing sea; the blanket of his hypocrisy had been torn from his shoulders.

"Murder an' mutiny's been done!" he screamed. "Handcuff 'em—iron 'em—jail's too good for 'em—hangin' too cheap! They've clapped me in my own hold—they've lost my cargo—they've bust out my forcs'l—they've played that devilish squeakin' bagpipe contrary to my precise orders. Mutiny! Murder! Hang 'em!"

He stopped suddenly. He recognized the captain of the tug.

"Captain Nelson," said that dignitary, "I'm a reliable man an' a Scotchman. I ain't seen nothin' wrong. I've found two good Scotchmen an' a friend of theirs, which is a friend of mine accordin', which has been abused some'in awful. One of 'em has been throwed overboard, an' the others is terrible misused. I'm goin' to take 'em right back to Bangor. As fer you, you kin hist your own sails, an' sail away where you like. There ain't no great of a wind now, an' no danger to you, more's the pity!"

And as the tug *Push and Pull* chugged away in the first light of morning, Nautical Nelson was serenaded by the parting strains of his particular abomination, a Scottish bagpipe.

As for the Cape Cod Finn, when he was told that three sailors had returned to Bangor and were extremely anxious to see him, he jumped the first freight out of town and never was heard from again, for, besides having a sense of humor, the Cape Cod Finn was a man of vast discretion.

THERE was Jones, a Cockney, and Kranz, a Dutchman; Harris, a mulatto, and Peel. Then there was Miller. He was not of their class, but he was brainy and a superior marksman; and Peel needed his unmoral support in robbing the Mission at Santa Marta.

They violated a sanctury, shot down a Monk, and departed in a whaleboat as they had come. After that—well, if you wish to know what happened after that, read "NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME" *by Frederick J. Jackson* in THE BLACK CAT next month.

THIRTY-FIVE TWENTY-SEVENTHS

BY OCTAVUS ROY COHEN

Twenty-seven people can possibly do the work of thirty-five, if fattened pay envelopes constitute the driving force. Otherwise thirty-five over twenty-seven is something more than a simple problem in division. Pointing out the dignity of labor is a poor incentive to industry.

PERSONALLY, Cyrus J. Hawkins was the very antithesis of romance. He was spare of frame, large of head and scant of hair; spindled-legged, narrow-shouldered, sunken-chested and cursed with a pair of lustrous black eyes with an X-ray power.

It was the eyes of Cyrus J. Hawkins that started all the trouble. Not one of the girls of the stenographic force could work with those orbs boring into the back of her head, however protected by switches. On occasion when the official glance was thus turned balefully on a malefactor, a bad business became worse, and on several occasions the girl stared at had broken into a paroxysm of weeping, whereat Cyrus J. Hawkins had grinned malevolently (or so it seemed to the other girls) and disappeared contentedly into his sanctum santorum.

But, however unpleasant it is to do so, the devil must be accorded his due. Cyrus J. Hawkins, office and sales manager of the Harrington Machinery Company, Inc., had his hands full and then some. The trouble lay in Harrington senior, chief stockholder in the corporation.

In the days before the Harrington Machinery Company, then *not* incorporated, was out of its swaddling clothes, Jim Harrington had been actual general manager. In those days he had employed an office force of nineteen persons, four of whom were more or less comely young ladies expert in the gentle art of hieroglyphing in notebooks and transferring their work into type with a greater or less degree of speed and accuracy.

Prosperity smiled upon the firm, and little by little the office and sales force was increased to twenty-seven persons, seven of whom were stenographers, by grace of business colleges. At the same time, the burden of work shifted by almost unnoticeable degrees from the exceedingly portly frame of Harrington senior, to the gaunt one of Cyrus J. Hawkins. After articles of incorporation were granted at the state capitol, Cyrus J. was officially made office and sales manager, while Harrington—now James Montgomery Harrington in place of plain Jim Harrington—builded himself a mahogany finished office, installed real mahogany furniture, genuine Havana cigars, and acquired an air of pomposity which was adequately defended by an overweening self-esteem.

Cyrus J. was a competent man, an exceedingly competent man, and in the following three years the business—incorporated—grew marvellously under his expert handling. But the force remained the same unelastic twenty-seven. For nearly a year now every man-jack and woman-jack of that force had been working at a maximum and three times Cyrus J. had approached the man in the mahogany office with demands for an increase of staff. Each time he had failed utterly to penetrate even the first trench line of Harrington senior's self-esteem. He was as immovable, as the oft-mentioned Rock of Gibraltar. He had run the business with a staff of twenty-seven and was paying Cyrus J. to do the same. That ended it, and Cyrus J. knew that it ended it, and for all time.

Therefore it followed, as a matter of course, that Cyrus J. must get out of the minds and bodies of his twenty-seven accredited employees the work which ordi-

narily thirty-five could not have handled with any too great a degree of despatch. In the course of time, three vertical wrinkles grew between the bridge of the nose and the place where his forelock should have met the forehead, and transversing these lines at more or less variant right angles was a series of furrows, which, as any phrenologist will tell you, denoted that Cyrus J. was both studious and worried.

He was worried because he knew the man for whom he worked, and he knew that he had to make good on the task assigned him, else his years of faithful service would be discounted one hundred per cent and another man summarily seated in his chair. And Cyrus was being paid a very fair salary and he wished to retain it. Father Time was on his heels, and already he was approaching the fateful fifty mark;—the fiftieth year when a man loses a bit of fighting ambition and becomes content to hold a well-paying position.

The lines of study were brought to his hitherto uncreased brow by reason of a mad chase after efficiency. Efficiency, to his way of thinking, was typified by making twenty-seven persons do the work of thirty-five. He absorbed one rule, and then like a student of the magpie, let the others slide. And this rule dealt with waste time, which under the new order of things was not to be found in the Harrington offices. But Cyrus J., not having pursued the subject of efficiency far enough, became an iron slave-driver.

For about a month his plan worked very satisfactorily and then insurrection broke out; not gradually, but with a sudden flare that startled him. He knew that he had Miss Marjorie Summers to thank for it.

Miss Summers drew at least twenty-five dollars a week as head stenographer for the Harrington Machinery Company, Inc. She was as competent as she was pretty, which is saying a good deal for her competence. And up to the time she was awakened to the leadership of rebellion, Cyrus J. Hawkins had liked her exceedingly. He disliked her as an opponent because he knew that she was no fool and also that she understood the situation perfectly. He thereupon construed her opposition to him as being deliberately unfriendly, and then proceeded to sever diplomatic relations. Whereat she perfected her plans of campaign and held an informal meeting with the other females of the office force shortly after the closing hour. The meeting was held in the ladies' cloak room, and Miss Summers harangued the gathering about as follows:

"The old fossil is doing us a dirty trick. Instead of standing right up to the boss, he's taking it out on us, and looking to each one to do two persons' work. But we've got the whip hand, because there's a certain amount of work that's got to be done, and if it isn't done the business goes to pot. And if he sees we aren't going to do it—or aren't doing it, as you may choose to express it—he's either got to make a firm stand with old man Harrington or else be fired, and me, I don't care which happens. I'm thinking I'd rather he'd be fired."

"But Marjorie,"—this from a flaxen-haired filing clerk,—"s'posin' he knows what we're up to an' fires us?"

Marjorie gazed upon the speaker with the condescension which twenty-five a week has the right to show towards seven-fifty.

"He can't! I've thought that out, too. He's getting all the work we can do now—and we're all broken into the business. New people have got to be broken in and while that's being done the work's falling behind. We've got things all our own way—but we've got to stand together."

And stand together they did—with a vengeance. The first day of open rebellion, Cyrus J. Hawkins believed the evidence of neither his sight nor his ears. The typewriters clicked all day long, but they lacked the frantic tattoo as the typebars cracked against platens. The letters and papers which came to his desk were faultlessly done but the quantity of work turned out by the seven typists assayed only about seventy-five per cent of the amount he had obtained under his slave-driving efficiency system.

That, in itself, was sufficient to arouse his suspicion; but when he noticed that

his two little filing clerks were working with accurate, painstaking lack of speed; that his woman biller was correspondingly dawdling, and that every other wearer of skirts paid greater attention to accuracy than to speed, he knew that he was up against a very hard proposition.

Thereupon he carried the campaign into the enemy's country. He moved his working desk into the outer office and watched. Thanks to the generalship of Miss Summers, his watching availed him nothing. Insofar as eyes could detect there was not so much as a minute's loafing—yet the quantity of work turned out daily grew less and less by almost infinitesimal degrees. And Miss Summers had guessed correctly when she asserted that he dared not discharge any of the insurrectoes because of the unthinkable waste in "breaking in" persons unfamiliar with the routine of the office.

If, under ordinary circumstances, the girls would have been softened to leniency at sight of Cyrus J.'s haggard face as the strain of battle left its indelible mark on him, their spirit of combat was kept alive by his irascibility and fed upon his uncompromising refusal to arbitrate. And Cyrus J. was game enough and sensible enough to fight his fight without carrying details to James Montgomery Harrington. In the first place, Harrington would not have believed; and in the second place, had he believed, he would have snorted with disgust and attributed it all to lack of executive ability on the part of his office manager. And Cyrus J. was upwards of fifty and his job looked very good to him. If Harrington had been human in even a minimum degree—but he wasn't, so there was no use in appealing to him.

At the end of two months there was an accumulation of work on hand which longer hours could not, and would not, cut down. All the raving and ranting, all the biting sarcasm and scathing denunciation of inefficiency in the vocabulary of the diminutive Cyrus J. availed nothing. The girls had reached their minimum speed and turned out just so much work daily; and as so much work was on the wrong side of being enough, the unfinished business of the office grew and grew. And in the big office Harrington—James Montgomery—thrived mightily and smoked his black, gold-banded perfectoes, and grew stouter and more florid and entertained the pleasing delusion that he was running his business very well and very economically.

Summer came, and with summer came heat, and with heat came longer afternoons and longer hours in the office. It was after one such sweltering afternoon that Miss Summers, on her arrival at the hall-bedroom which she occupied in sole state, discovered that her keys were not in her purse.

She felt a sense of panic and impending disaster. Miss Summers, in addition to being head stenographer, was keeper of the incidental cash and one of the keys on her key-ring gave access to the big steel cash box that did duty in lieu of a safe. Harrington had used no combination safe in the old days and he therefore used no safe now. And it was important that those keys should not be lost, for, while the cash usually kept in the cash box was small in amount, it was sufficiently large to prove worrisome to Miss Marjorie Summers.

She summoned a fellow boarder of the masculine gender, ardently inclined towards herself despite his eighteen dollars a week, and requested his escort as far as the office. It was past supper when they set out and he insisted on stopping for an ice-cream soda. At their arrival at the factory, she was surprised to discover that there was a light burning in the office. Now she would not have to bother the watchman. She left her cavalier outside and mounted the short flight of steps. She turned the knob and the door opened readily. She entered—then stopped short.

Seated before a typewriter, his head pillowed on crossed arms, was Cyrus J. Hawkins, fast asleep, and as she looked at him she felt her first pang of conscience. His narrow shoulders were hunched forward, and he looked very old and very bald and very tired. In the platen was a partly finished letter, one which he had dictated to her that day and which she,

knowing its importance, had purposely refrained from sending.

The maternal instinct in the girl was aroused and she felt very sorry and very mean and very small. She tiptoed to her desk, and saw, by the little man's hand, her missing bunch of keys. It was evident that they had slipped from her bag which, during the day, she kept atop her desk, after the fashion of stenographers the world over. And as she took the keys she coughed.

The little man jerked himself upright, and rose stammeringly to his feet. At sight of her, his frown re-appeared and he summoned the cold aloofness which had clothed him during hostilities in which he had recognized her as the opposition leader.

"Miss Summers! What are you doing here?"

The girl flushed.

"I—I—forgot my keys. I just returned for them. I—I—can't I finish that letter for you?"

The little man gazed at her sharply, and shook his head.

"No, thank you," he said coldly. "You should have done it before you left here. I am able to attend to it myself."

"But I can do it so much more quickly."

"You can work with greater speed during the day, too, Miss Summers,—but you don't do it."

"I—I—"

"Don't apologize, please. I have realized that there was a conspiracy against me. I've been fighting it as best I could. I ask no quarter."

The calm dignity of the little martinet appealed to the girl as nothing else could have done.

"You drove us to it—"

"Excuse me, I did not. It was not I who demanded that my working force do fifty per cent more work than we have a right to expect. It is Mr. Harrington. I am in his employ just as you are, and I am responsible to him for what you do and don't do. But it has never occurred to any of you that he might be to blame. It was I—you never analyzed. You knew him well enough to know that when the work fell very far behind he would fire me. All right—" he shrugged. "I'm afraid, Miss Summers, that I'll have to concede you the victory. I'm beaten."

"Beaten?" The word of victory had a hollow sound now that it was uttered. The little man looked so lonely and so quietly game. If only he had been angry and had railed at her. But no—he was polite and quiet and heroically unheroic.

"Yes. Certain matters are coming up tomorrow—one of them the McDavis contract—which have not been attended to, thanks to the refusal of my office force to work up to the best of its ability, and Harrington will hold me to account for it. It will, or would, lead to a scene. I shall avoid that by a plain talk with Mr. Harrington beforehand. I shall also have my resignation ready."

"You mean—you will resign, whether or no?"

He bowed gravely.

"That is what I mean. I know Harrington—as well as you do. I would far rather resign than be forced out. I shall at least retain my self-respect."

"You—you—have been working here—every night?"

"Of course. I am entrusted with the work of the office. If those I employ refuse to do the work they can do—and refuse by actions cleverly calculated to save them from being discharged—it is up to me to make good their deficiency insofar as I can."

His precise manner won her admiration. There was no hint of cringing.

"May I ask you a personal question, Mr. Hawkins?"

"Certainly."

"You—" she flushed. "You are dependent on your—position here?"

"What do you mean?"

"It means more to you than—just a job?"

This time the man flushed and embarrassment showed on his face.

"We'll hardly discuss that, Miss Summers. Very often there are personal reasons to spur a man to greater effort than was intended for him by nature; reasons which are his, and are sacredly private.

They exist, Miss Summers, even in the life of a crabbed, crusty old bachelor."

It was a new angle to the little man's character: this nobility of purpose which kept him slaving his health away. And that it was a strong motive she knew—else he would not have done as he had been doing. Impulsively she turned.

"Wait one minute, please." She left the office, descended the stairway and summarily dismissed her escort, much to that pompadoured young gentleman's bewildered sorrow. Then she returned to the office, doffed coat and hat and approached Cyrus J. Hawkins.

"Please let me sit there, Mr. Hawkins," she said quietly.

"What for, please?"

"I'm going to work here until that McDavis thing is finished. And you're not going to resign, and— Oh! I want to tell you that I am sorry, very sorry, and that I'm going to do all I can to rectify the wrong I have done. Believe me, Mr. Hawkins, and let me do my little toward righting things, won't you? And please promise me that you'll give me another trial—that you won't resign your position."

He stared at her strangely. Then suddenly he shoved a bony little hand toward her.

"Thank you, Miss Summers. We'll shake on it, if you wish."

And shake they did, and a friendship was born between them. Together they worked until two o'clock in the morning and when they finished, the voluminous mass of papers in the McDavis matter was neatly completed. The little man escorted the girl to her boarding house and there left her. As she mounted the stairway to her room she felt a sense of elation which comes to those who have been magnanimous in the hour of victory.

Just before the working hour struck next morning there was a second conference in the cloakroom of the women employees of the Harrington Machinery Company, Incorporated. And again Miss Marjorie Summers was spokesman. She excelled herself in her graphic description of the scene on the previous night, and by the time she finished, more than half of her hearers were weeping softly. The average woman is ninety per cent emotion and sentiment, anyway.

"I don't know what it is girls," she wound up, "but there is some secret in his life; some motive which has compelled him to drive and drive himself ten times as hard as he has tried to drive us. I, for one, have finished with my loafing. I'm going to work and work and work—I'm for him first and last."

"And me."

"Me too."

"So am I."

It was a starry-eyed crowd of girls that seated themselves at their machines and took their desks as the working bell struck in the factory entrance. In a second, typebars were clicking against platens with a speed that the office had never before known; the filing clerks worked with lightning speed, the other office girls bustled about swiftly, intent on their tasks. The eyes of Cyrus J. Hawkins met those of Miss Marjorie Summers and a smile of mutual understanding passed between them. Somehow, all the girls felt that their victory was complete—that there was more for them in such magnanimity than there could ever be in a triumph which lost to the game little man his position.

Cyrus J. Hawkins strolled to the window and gazed out upon the smoke-limned skyline of the district. He smiled very gently indeed, and rubbed the palms of his hands together softly.

"I call it clever," he soliloquized softly, "the whole thing. First slipping the keys from her bag, knowing that she'd miss them, be worried, and return; then pretending to be asleep, and working that sympathy gag on her. They do say that there are more ways of killing a chicken than by tickling it to death with a feather.

"And after all the end is worth the means. They'll catch up with the work in no time—and everybody's happy!"

He faced the office as he walked back to his desk and he smiled again. He seemed twenty years younger. And the girls smiled with him. They were as content as he.

A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY

BY GRACE MACGOWAN COOKE

In Texas, when spring is in the air and in the blood, one is likely to meet Dan Cupid riding the range almost any day. For then, the heart, "like a maverick, goes astray"; and friend Dan is always on the lookout for the heart that does just that.

IT took him by the throat in the first flush of primrose time. Spring comes early down there in southwest Texas. Marshall's ranch was all the land enclosed in a broad canyon. A mile of fence across the eastern end made him king of his own little country.

He had loved the life and exulted in it for ten years; and now, suddenly, just because the earth was green and the sky was blue, his heart was stormed by a thousand foolish emotions.

He took his pinto pony into his confidence as he rode, but the pinto had no wisdom wherewith to meet this strange emergency.

Marshall was a long, lithe brown young fellow, all bone and muscle. His clear, gray eyes were never very widely opened, and they gave a lazy or indifferent turn to a countenance which would otherwise have been over-strenuous. A few people had trusted to that laziness and indifference, and been deceived.

As he rode up to his comfortable ranch house, he saw one of his cowboys—a small cockney Englishman, who had been a groom in the old country—exercising a milk-white pony up and down the long sandy drive from the front gate to the porch. She was a pretty creature, a grade horse, and Cockney Jim had thrown a red Navajo blanket over her, and let it dangle, skirt fashion.

"What in the mischief is that for?" called Marshall.

"I'm a-gentlin' a good 'oss for the Missus, 'gainst the time you bring her out," replied Jim, impudently.

"You go to ——! Well, hang your impudence!" cried Marshall, with a little unnecessary heat, for he felt himself blushing under the ten layers of tan that ten Texas summers had given him. He laughed foolishly, and busied himself with his spur, which he fancied was coming loose.

"I get it from all quarters," he confided to the pinto. "The whole world has gone crazy." And then he went into the house and told his factotum, Manuel, to pack a grip for him, and send over for the major-domo, to inform him that he, Marshall, was called East suddenly, to the bedside of a sick relative. As it was well known on the ranch that Marshall had not a relative in the world nearer than a second cousin, this statement caused more of the laughter which Marshall, himself, had called foolish, and which, as he was a strict disciplinarian, was kept out of his sight.

When he got over to Antelope, where he took the train, he sent a telegram to this one, solitary second cousin, his sole link to a world that had women in it, to announce his coming.

He said to himself, with a whimsical smile, that he was homesick. He could find no fitter word to describe the longing that was in him, though at the bottom of his heart he recognized it as the stirrings of the primal race instinct; he knew that it was thus, and not otherwise, the heart of Adam yearned before his Creator sent that kindly sleep upon him and made such excellent use of a rib.

His telegram distinctly fluttered an exclusively feminine household in a small Massachusetts town. There was Mrs. Baldwin, the aforementioned second cousin, a woman of determination. There

was Sarah, her daughter, who may be dismissed, safely, as the daughter of her mother. And there was Katharine Brent, a guest in the house, who thought it was extremely interesting to have a second or third cousin one had not seen for ten years coming all the way from Texas to visit one.

The mother and daughter held a guarded little consultation about the matter. Katharine was an extremely pretty and a very charming girl. "His coming now at this time, and in this way, can mean only one thing," said Mrs. Baldwin, decisively.

Sarah and Marshall had exchanged letters, perhaps a half dozen times, in the past ten years. There must always be some one affair to which a woman can refer as "the affair," and her third cousin, Robert Marshall, had served this useful purpose to Sarah Baldwin. But now she demurred.

"Oh, I don't know, mother," she remonstrated, "it's two years since I had the last letter from cousin Robert, and even then he wrote at Christmas time to send those resurrection plants and Mexican curiosities. It wasn't a—it wasn't that kind of a letter, you know."

"I think," said Mrs. Baldwin, severely, "that you ought to tell Katharine just how matters stand between yourself and Robert. It will save misunderstandings."

Speech is used for various purposes besides that of conveying mere information. You and I know that Mrs. Baldwin did not want Katharine Brent told just how matters stood between Robert Marshall and her daughter, but, rather, just how matters did not stand.

Sarah Baldwin was not an inventive person, but she managed, in the week before Marshall's arrival, by various hints and half admissions, to convey the desired impression to Katharine Brent's mind.

When Marshall came, it chanced that they were all on the lawn together. Sarah gave him both hands, and earnestly wished that his kindly greeting had been a little more lover-like. She wished it mainly for the sake of Katharine, who was looking on.

Then she looked up, and saw that those quiet gray eyes of his had gone past her and were gazing at Katharine Brent, exactly as though Katharine were the one whom he had come two thousand miles to see.

It is strange now perverse the human heart is. Mrs. Baldwin and Sarah would both have told you that the latter was just the wife for Robert Marshall, and indeed, some of the neighbors might have agreed with them. Sarah was not at all a bad-looking girl, and she had a little money of her own; while Katharine Brent was an orphan, halting here at the Baldwin home for a few weeks after completing her college course before engaging in the profession for which it had fitted her.

And yet Robert Marshall had no more doubt, when he looked at Katharine Brent, that he had found his wife than he had of her beauty and sweetness.

The two weeks that followed his homecoming were tantalizing weeks. He could never see Katharine alone. If he asked her a question, it was ten chances to one that Mrs. Baldwin or Sarah answered it for her. She seemed to be hedged about in all directions by a mysterious barrier.

It wasn't because he was a man and a possible lover, he could see that; for the young rector of St. Jude's, who was a great friend of the family, could see her and talk to her and walk with her at any time. It occurred to Marshall more than once that the rector's attentions to Katharine were distinctly welcomed and encouraged, while he could not show her what he thought ordinary civilities. As the time for his departure approached, Marshall's impatience mounted. They were all sitting in the parlor one evening. The rector had been reading Kipling's "Recessional." Katharine was asked to sing, which she did very sweetly, riveting poor Marshall's chains with every note.

"Did you ever hear any of the Mexican music?" Marshall asked her, in a low tone. "It would suit your voice."

"Why would it?" she asked, smilingly.

"It requires a very flexible voice," he answered. "It has so many accidentals and odd little broken half-tones, which

very few singers but the Mexicans themselves are able to give. I would love to hear you sing *'La Golondrina'*—that's 'The Swallow,' you know—let me show you how it goes."

Bob sat down on the music bench beside her. "No," he laughed, as she would have risen, "I can't play much. You stay here and I'll point out the keys for you."

He had begun on the first bars of the exquisite melody. He turned an ardent, smiling glance across his shoulder to Katharine, as she sat beside him.

"See, that's how it goes. It is the Mexican 'Home, Sweet Home,' that is, I mean that they love it as we love 'Home, Sweet Home.'"

Katharine said something in reply, but it was lost in Sarah Baldwin's voice.

"What is that perfectly lovely thing you are playing, Cousin Robert? Why haven't we had you play for us before? I had forgotten how charmingly you do play. Is it a duet?"

Katharine was on her feet.

"Mr. Marshall was trying to show me some Mexican music," she said, coolly; then with a look at him that was anything but kindly, "Thank you, I don't believe I could ever learn it," and she walked over to where the rector and Mrs. Baldwin were discussing the best kind of plants for an herbaceous border. Her cheeks were flushed, and she displayed unnecessary vigor in expressing her opinion as to the plants.

How was poor Bob to know that she felt as though Sarah Baldwin suspected her of an unmaidenly attempt to get up a flirtation with another girl's promised husband?

He tried vainly all the evening to regain the ground he had mysteriously lost. "Mayn't I write out that song for you?" he begged in a half-whisper aside. "Won't you try it?"

"Oh, thank you," she answered, in a rather raised tone, "Sarah plays so beautifully; if you'll just give her the air she can make a delightful piece of it."

The next day Bob tried putting a little note into Katharine's hand as he picked up her handkerchief for her.

"Is this something of yours?" she inquired, disengaging it from the folds of linen and holding it toward him.

They were under the battery of two pairs of eager and curious eyes, and Marshall assented, rather grimly, that it was his, but nothing of any account, as he took it. Something in Katharine's face, some look of relenting, perhaps, made him determine, as he tucked his poor rejected note into his pocket, that he would make an end of this thing tomorrow. He was going the day after. Tomorrow he would talk to her. It was absurd to think that he dared not come to the house, as any other young man might, and ask for her, without asking for his cousins.

That evening because fortune favors the brave, and making up your mind strongly to a thing is apt to bring that (or something else) about, Sarah was called from the room to attend the visit of a dressmaker, and her mother, a few minutes later, went out to look after some household matter. Each thought the other would be back almost immediately, and for one long, delicious hour, Bob sat and talked to Katharine.

He wasted no time in preliminaries. He sat down before her and asked her questions—as one having authority. Was she fond of horses? Ah, so was he. Did she like an outdoor life? He also delighted in it. That's what had taken him to Texas ten years before. Then he described the ranch to her with such earnestness that she finally interrupted him, laughing:

"See here, Mr. Marshall, are you a ranchman or a real estate agent? Do you want to sell me that ranch?"

"No," said Bob, boldly, and his eyes were not lazy as he looked at her, "I want to give it to you."

Just then Sarah and Mrs. Baldwin came in hurriedly; but not before Marshall had heard, at some length, the story of Katharine's hopes, plans and prospects. He had found that his first impression of her was, as it always is, the right one; and he knew, not because she had told him or shown it in any unmaidenly fashion, that the first strong attraction had been mutual; so when he went to the

Baldwins' that last day, he had it all beautifully planned.

He would ring the bell and ask for Miss Katharine Brent. He didn't want Sarah nor her mother. He would see them later, when he and Katharine had settled their affairs.

Now observe how ill he plans who plans only for victory.

When Marshall opened the gate at the Baldwins' they were all on the lawn, and the rector was with them. It was a very warm day for early May, and the chairs and a table, with books, some work and a tea-tray on it, had been moved out there.

Poor Katharine's cheeks were scarlet as she greeted him. A long night of wakeful misery over the things she had said and the things she had listened to from Sarah Baldwin's affianced had left her with a feeling of spent and weary melancholy that was almost despair.

How dared he talk so to her! And yet, always, there was the conviction that it was she, and not Sarah, whom he loved; and the belief that it was she and not Sarah, who could make his life's happiness.

Marshall sat down and took the cup of tea his cousin offered him, very quietly. He didn't drink tea, but it gave him an opportunity for reflecting and planning. He stirred it so long and so solemnly, as he went over every possible course of action, that his cousin Sarah finally cried in despair, "Robert, I know you like things sweet; but really, that's the seventh lump of sugar, and I don't think—"

There was a general laugh. "I do like sweet things," returned Marshall gravely. "Miss Katharine, will you walk down to the beach with me? I want to say good-bye."

There was a sort of horrified hush. "Why, you're not going right now," returned Katharine, in a very low tone.

"Oh, no," replied Marshall, "not till to-morrow morning, but I have a lot of things to tell you, and—"

"How we shall all miss you," broke in Mrs. Baldwin's calm tones. "I really think Sarah and I will have to pay you that long-promised visit some time next year."

"The long-promised visit" was almost, if not quite, an inspiration of the moment. There may have been some talk of the sort, but Marshall had forgotten it. Its mention, however, served the purpose well. The rector was reminded of a visit he had promised to pay, and which he was going to compass within the next two years. He described this at some length. Sarah added details of an outing of her own the spring before. Katharine had been one of the party at that time. Sarah strove vainly to draw her into the conversation about it.

The culprit, I may say both culprits, sat silent, while the three "good people" talked vivaciously, not to say industriously.

But the silence of the two differed. Katharine's was the muteness of utter misery. Marshall was quiet because he was planning more and greater atrocities.

Suddenly Katharine rose, with a little inarticulate murmur. "I'll get those roses," she said to Mrs. Baldwin, "and dress our tea table, as you asked me to."

She went to where the big, old-fashioned Prairie Queen clambered all over the porch, and began cutting clusters of pink blossoms. Standing in the sunlight, with her arms upraised, she looked so lovely that Sarah Baldwin regretted that Marshall was there to see. She glanced toward him. He was looking at Katharine.

Sarah started over with the intention of seating herself beside her cousin and having a last good long talk.

Now, I think it is a pity that individuals are not provided with gauges, such as one may see upon steam boilers, to register the pressure of the steam within. If there had been such a guage as that anywhere about Robert Marshall, so that his cousin, Sarah Baldwin, could have known just how near the point marked "dangerous" things were coming, she would never have done as she did, nor spoken as she did, appropriating him, placing herself just where she cut off his view of Katharine—for, mark the result! This action of hers made the pressure just one ounce too much.

Katharine drew back her hand with a

little exclamation of pain. Marshall arose and went swiftly over to where she stood. "Did you hurt yourself?" he said. "Is the thorn in there?"

"Never mind," returned Katharine hastily. "It is all right. Oh, yes, I think the thorn is in still," as he took her small, tremulous hand in his two strong brown ones, and began looking for it, "there in the wrist."

"Don't flinch so, child. I won't hurt you. There now. Steady! Out she comes!"

He held her hand after the thorn was out, and looked at it whimsically. It appeared very small, and white, and helpless. He waited until he was aware that all three of the others were regarding them intently and curiously. Then he said, exactly as though they were alone:

"When I was a child and hurt myself, my mother used always to kiss the place and make it well." He raised the little white wrist quite deliberately to his lips and kissed it; then he dropped an arm lightly around Katharine's waist.

"My good friends," he said calmly, turning to the other three, "this young lady and I expect to be married before I go back next week. Naturally we have a good deal to arrange. I'm afraid she has been too shy to tell you about it, but now we're going to walk down on the beach and talk it over."

When they came back an hour later, two very happy people, with "the light that never was on land nor sea" shining serenely from their faces, the rector had gone.

Mrs. Baldwin and Sarah sat disconsolate. "Well," said the latter, "of all crazy things! How long has this engagement been a fact, may I ask?"

Katharine hung her head, laughing and blushing; but Sarah's angry eye caught the gleam of a big diamond on her finger.

"Why did you never show me that before?" she cried, pouncing on it. "Aren't you going to tell me how long you two have been engaged?"

"I just brought the ring this afternoon," answered Marshall, speaking for both; "but the engagement,—why, bless your soul, Sally dear, I left one of the cowboys exercising Kate's horse when I rode over to take the train at Antelope."

There was a general chorus of surprise, and Marshall heard Kate's voice in it.

"Oh, I did. You needn't think the horse isn't there. It's a good one, and it's a white one, and its name is Texas."

THE poet laureate of C. Troop was ranked as high as the poet laureate of England until "Foureyes," late of *The Lampoon,* pointed out a shortage in metrical feet. The rookie from Harvard did not stop at lampooning the poetry, he had to lampoon the poet as well, thereby starting something he couldn't finish.

You will find this story in THE BLACK CAT for June. See GOD'S HALF ACRE by G. B. Buchanan.

IN LIEU OF LEAP YEAR

BY MILO HASTINGS

A steed from the stable of Cupid that will not stand without hitching may accomplish more lasting though perhaps less visible destruction than an unromantic undertaker's horse from an unromantic livery stable dashing homeward to an unromantic supper of oats and hay.

FICTION is based on life.

That is the unconscious, obvious, profitable, inevitable shop-rule of a few score of literal and literary grubbers who say their prayers on Manhattan Island when the crimson light in the belfry of the Metropolitan tower winks ten P. M. But the masses it concerns not; where the spindles spin, and the reapers reap, and the sheep baa, the rule is—unconsciously perhaps—reversed, and—

Life is based on fiction.

Phidias T. Quisenberry was a unit in the masses. Phidias T. lived with his mother, dealt in real estate, and was a serious, retiring, exemplary, bashful, well-read young man.

For twelve or fifteen years, Phidias had been secretly contemplating marriage, but he didn't know how to go about it. The town where he resided and thrived had a population of about three thousand souls. All these human beings Phidias could recognize by their walk and call by both Christian and heathen names. How could a man fall in love with a woman with whom he had played cross-tag or held on his knee while her mother punched up the pillow in the baby carriage. It was unnatural, non-fictional and impossible.

Phidias read the magazines faithfully and memorized all the ways in which heroes meet their affinities. One dark night he tripped over a lady's purse. The purse contained a card. He took it to a lamp post and read the name of his cousin Betty. He began buying the eggs for his mother. The third year he found a name and address written on one of the thin calcareous shells. It was the name of a girl who had been in his Sunday-school class since 1897.

After Phidias had shifted the deeds of all the transferable real estate in his home town, and some of it four or five times, he began to dream of larger worlds to buy and sell and conquer. Over in the next county was the growing city of Rugglesville with a coal mine, a butter-tub factory, a street-car track, two daily papers and a population of twenty-five thousand. Phidias journeyed thither and rented an office and bought a cottage.

The former owner of the cottage agreed to vacate October first, and Mrs. Quisenberry and her son moved in on October second.

Phidias knew a score of men and one married woman in the city. But there were several thousand women on whom the dim light of strangership shed halos of romantic uncertainty. Still, he was a business man with character to lose and a reputation to gain—and married women's kerchiefs will fall by the wayside as well as those of the "single blessings." Churches seemed a safer prospect, and Phidias decided to look over the choirs in turn, which would take till Christmas. Impatience ne'er won a bride without the help of Fate, and Fate—how did one enlist Fate in one's behalf?

Better to refresh his memory on the working plans of this unseen mistress of Destiny, Phidias sat one evening on the steps of his cottage reading his favorite weekly magazine, while his mother was in the dining-room unpacking a ninety-six piece set of china and placing it on shelves covered with fresh newspapers.

The hero of Phidias' story was an avi-

ator whose petrol tank had exploded above a cloud. The brave pilot was falling by inches and adjectives through the nasty wet cloud right into the castle yard where his unseen, unknown, imprisoned, bride-to-be was taking Delsartian exercises, with the ramrod of a Waterlooan musket.

"Meurow."

Phidias dropped the helpless aviator on the stone step, and saw upon the walk before him a maltese cat. "Behold," said Phidias, "I address me to one of the steeds on which Dan Cupid oft doth ride."

"Milk, please, or chicken with gravy," said the cat in readily translatable feline vernacular.

"But where," asked Phidias, "is the sleigh-bell on your neck with the Rajah's favorite pearl for a bell-clapper—or the lady's card?"

The cat merely repeated his order.

"Draw one," shouted the willing waiter, as he rushed into the hall, "and a squab in a castle role." Then he went into the kitchen to hurry the order.

Returning to the board walk, Phidias served his guest with the best the house could offer.

Mrs. Quisenberry hastily removed her kitchen apron and came out to be presented to the visitor. "It is a distinguished looking cat," she commented admiringly.

Phidias was rubbing the fur the wrong way but found neither fleas nor brands; the cat's ears were unfrozen and unpunched; his whiskers unsinged and his eyes undimmed.

"Son," remarked Mrs. Quisenberry, "the cat has six toes."

"By crickets!" exclaimed Phidias; "so he has. I knew he was a cat with a message or a deformity—or something."

"He doesn't belong to either of our neighbors," said the mother, "for both of them have called and reported nothing but dogs and children."

That night Phidias locked the portentous visitor in the woodshed, and thereafter nourished him and watched over him with solicitous care.

Phidias had attended four churches; he had been elected on the Boost Committee, and had sold a plot of ground to a new factory crowd who were going to make vegetable ivory out of the casein of skimmilk. Business prospects and speaking lists alike were growing; the mists of romance were disappearing before the sunshine of acquaintance—and the six-toed cat still slept in the woodshed.

Phidias sat in the dining room waiting for supper. He was penciling remnants of geometry on the margin of a newspaper. Suddenly he became agitated. "Mother," he called, "from whence came this paper?"

Mrs. Quisenberry looked up from the stove. "It must be one I took off the shelves when I put the new oilcloth on."

"Listen to this—

Lost, strayed or stolen—a maltese cat with six toes on each of its front feet. Finder will please return to Miss Estelle Burlingame, 220 Fowler Street, and receive suitable reward."

"I recall," said Mrs. Quisenberry, "I was unpacking the china that night when you found the cat. It is too bad; I am afraid he has become used to our place by now; cats, you know, become attached to places, not people. But come, son, supper is ready."

Phidias crumbed his bread in the soup, thinned the pudding with milk and washed down the cake with tea. "I must take the cat right home," he said; "she must have missed him, he is such an intelligent cat."

The mother rose from her half-eaten supper and fetched a covered basket. "Better put him in this," she said; "he might get away from you on the street."

Basket on arm, Phidias punched the bell at 220 Fowler Street. The young lady who opened the door was not so very young—but still she wasn't old.

"Good evening," said Phidias, "you are Miss Burlingame, I believe."

"Yes, and you are Mr. Quisenberry; you were at our church Sunday. Won't you come in?"

Phidias followed Miss Burlingame into a parlor containing a piano, a "Reading from Homer," the Three Fates done in plaster relief, and Ingall's "Opportunity" burnt on sheepskin. He set his basket down beside his chair.

"How do you like our city?" asked Miss Estelle.

"About as usual," said Phidias, fidgeting. "You live in Rugglesville, I presume?"

Estelle smiled indulgently. "One might call it that. I teach the B Grammar in the First Ward school."

Phidias glanced uneasily at his basket; he was playing for time, and feared the cat would call his hand.

"Have you been marketing?" asked his calm-mannered hostess.

"No, not exactly—I—eh—I was just going— Phidias was plainly flustered. "It looks like snow, doesn't it?" he asked abruptly, then he remembered that it was only November third and very clear and warm, and a mortified red suffused his homely features.

"Perhaps it does—that is, I hope it will next month; I like a white Christmas."

The basket tumbled over on its side. Phidias glanced at it in dismay; but the contents readjusted itself to the changed environment and began to purr.

"That reminds me," said Phidias, "that I called to—did you ever lose a cat?"

"Why, yes, I did once; it was some time ago; I fear the dogs killed it."

"I have a cat in the basket," said Phidias.

"So it seems," said Estelle. "What are you going to do with it?"

"I am going to give it to you."

"Do you think it is mine?"

"I know it is."

Estelle wondered why he didn't let the cat out, then a flash of inspiration crossed her mind and she said: "Perhaps we oughtn't to let it out in here; he might be angry and—scratch the piano. Shall I take him out to the kitchen?"

"I expect you had better," said Phidias.

Miss Burlingame returned with the empty basket. "I put him to sleep under the stove," she said.

Phidias rose to take the basket. "What is your cat's name?" he asked, with sudden brilliancy.

"Nebby; it's short for Nebuchadnezzar."

"I hope Nebby is glad to get home," said Phidias, as he reached for his hat.

"I hope so, too."

"Good-night."

"Good-night. I am glad you called."

Catless, churchless, magazineless, Phidias perambulated through a joyless week. Friday night at supper his mother said: "Son, you will have to take Miss Burlingame's cat home again; he came back today."

"Ah-ah!" said Phidias, as he walked down the street with his six-toed ally upon his arm. "So we forgot something, didn't we? Thought we had to do it at one session like a common purse finder or a drowning girl saver. But now we can take our time, eh? That's why the cat came back; how about it old sport?"

And Nebby snuggled his nose into the black sateen lining of Phidias' best coat and seemed very well pleased with his work.

The next Friday night it was Phidias who spoke at supper: "Mother, did Nebby come back today?"

Mrs. Quisenberry shook her head sadly.

But after supper Phidias got his hat and coat, and laughingly told his mother that he guessed he could get along now without Nebby's assistance.

At about eleven that night, when Phidias returned home, he found Nebby sitting on his front porch.

This time, Phidias called up on the 'phone to ask Miss Burlingame when he should return the perfidious Nebuchadnezzar.

"Come over Tuesday evening," said Estelle, "but never mind about Nebby; let him stay—that is, if your mother likes him; you see, it is pretty lonesome for him here, as my sister and I are away all day."

The steeds that bear Dan Cupid are not beasts of burden to be put on regular runs like mail-carriers and mine-mules. Nebby had done his work and would

have been allowed to sit under the stove all day unmolested if Phidias' mother had not lain sick of a fever and passed to her reward. But death and love are mixed in life, and life is mixed in fiction, and fiction is made from life, and round and round it goes, and it caught poor Nebby on a prong of circumstance and dragged him forth again into the spotlight of human utility.

It was the night after Christmas, and in the Burlingame house Phidias T. Quisenberry was wishing that Nebby would walk in and help him start something; or that one of the plaster Fates would step down and—but there was Ingalls' "Opportunity" thundering at him from the burnt leather: "Once at every gate....before I turn away...." And Phidias, knowing that his hour had come, screwed his courage to the speaking point:

"Estelle, don't you suppose it is pretty lonesome for Nebby there alone all day since mother left?"

"Why, I hadn't thought of that. You may bring him back here, you know."

"I hadn't thought of *that*," said Phidias miserably.

The Fate with the water jug winked a plaster-of-paris eye at her neighbor on the right.

"But he wouldn't stay," said Phidias, when the next wave of courage struck him; "had you thought of that?"

Time was fleeting, the Fates were fretting, and the burnt leather Ingalls was droning—"Reach every state mortals desire—but they who doubt or hesitate—" And Estelle replied:

"It may be rather lonesome here, too. You know my sister is to be married New Year's day."

And Phidias said—

But why hurry the man, he had all evening and we have only half a column. Suffice us to know that the B Grammar had romance too—a new teacher in the middle of the term. And that would be all there is to tell if it wasn't for Nebby's growing fondness for the spotlight, and that pestiferous and peripatetic nuisance known as a red-headed boy.

It was Sunday afternoon, and Phidias T. was sitting on the front steps reading the inevitable magazine. Nebby was at his side watching approvingly some newly married and inexperienced sparrows who were starting a nest out on a wobbly limb where the June storms would spill out the young birds for Nebby's edification. Mrs. Phidias T. had gone to a ladies' missionary meeting and would not be back for two hours. And so, with the stage all set, the redheaded trouble-maker arrived. Scraping the tacks in his heels on the cement sidewalk, he came and hung over the front gate.

"Say Mister, that's our cat," he piped.

"I guess not," said Phidias, arising to defend the symbol and representative of his hearthstone.

"Oh, yes it is,' said the boy, coming up the walk. "When we moved from this house last fall, we took him along to Rock Center but he wouldn't stay. I ain't never been back here till now, or I would have called for him sooner."

"I think I can prove that you are mistaken," replied Phidias, picking up Nebby. "This is a very unusual cat; he has six toes on each of his front feet."

"Sure," said the lad with the rouged hair.

"Well," snapped Phidias, "there couldn't be another cat like that, could there?"

"Sure; there was two like that in the litter; I gave the other one to the teacher, but this'n is ours—hers had a white hind foot."

Phidias dropped Nebby and thrust his hand into his pocket. "Here's a dollar for your cat."

The boy stowed away the dollar and turned to leave. Phidias called him back. "Here's five more dollars," he said; "the first is for the cat and the five is to pay you to promise never to speak to a living soul about cats again; you are to forget that you ever had a cat; all the cats you had had five toes—understand?"

"Now, ain't he the easy guy," grinned the boy, as he turned up the street; "six dollars for a cat and Bull would have eaten him hair and all if I'd taken him home."

GENTLEMEN OF GENEROSITY

BY HARRISON SEVILLE

From a business standpoint, generosity ceases to be an asset when it begins to reduce one's other assets. If you are suffering from an excess of liberality due to a lapse from virtue or other natural causes, don't forget to enter "generosity" in the schedule of liabilities when you file your petition in bankruptcy.

JIMMIE Heath paused with his glass half raised to his lips to study the man at the next table to him. Jimmie had just arrived at Fonseca and as he sat there under the gay striped awnings of the Plaza, sipping his wine and watching the busy sunlit street beyond, he never felt more lonely.

"Surely not Charlie Cummings way down here in this forsaken spot," he murmured.

The man at the next table turned a flushed face toward him.

"Why Jimmie Heath!" A glint of recognition shown in the man's blood-shot eyes. "Where did you fall from?"

"Came down to report on some mining land. Sent down by the Consolidated." Jimmie smiled proudly as he reached for the big man's hand.

Charlie Cummings was a big man physically, but it was the kind of bigness that reminds one of an overgrown bear cub. There was nothing of the æsthetic in his entire six foot two; his shoulders were broad but not powerful, his feet were large but not well formed, and there was not a single strong feature on his whole face.

As he comprehended Jimmie's words, his face blanched and he reached for his half-filled glass.

"God!" he groaned. "I was expecting to get that. They knew I was down here. I just had a letter from them."

There was a painful silence. Jimmie worked his glass nervously back and forth over the marble top of the table. He was not proud that he had to thank his uncle, the new president of the Consolidated, for his selection.

"I'm sorry, Charlie," he finally apologized. "You know those big corporations have no soul; one's job depends merely on the caprice of the board of directors. If you are really looking for something to tide you over, though, come along with me. It will give you enough to get back to the states, and your knowledge of the country will help me to finish in jig time. And believe me, I have to hurry. Only have two weeks before the company's option runs out. You see the darned boat was a week late and it's got me all balled up. What d'you say?"

"Yes, I know the country." muttered Cummings. "And if you are going very far into the mountains, you'll never make it in two weeks without a blamed good guide."

Jimmie seemed to take this statement for assent. He pulled a blue-print from his inside pocket and smoothed it out on the table. Cummings drew his chair up with a great show of indifference. Jimmie called for more liquor.

"I don't mind telling you all about it, Charlie; it's really no secret among the trade. The Consolidated picked up this option on what seems to be some mighty fine iron ore, red hematite. They say there's thousands of tons of the stuff laying exposed and Heaven knows how much more in the mountains. If it's as near the coast as this plan shows it, it should be an easy matter to build a railroad to it. All I want to do now is to ride up there, see if the stuff's what they say it is, and see if a railroad's possible. If I can cable an 'O. K.,' I'm a made man. I'll be the Chief Engineer."

Cummings bent closer to the blue-print.

To think that all this might have been for him; that with his training and experience he could do this much better than Heath. To think that even now it was only through him, Charlie Cummings, that the thing was possible. And Jimmie was going to use him for a stepping-stone! Cummings smiled. The mountain road was narrow, the footing was treacherous; if Jimmie's burro should slip, well, there would still be mines and railroads and wharves, but there would be another engineer.

Cummings began to show interest in the project. Guided by the contour lines on the blue-print, he slowly traced his railroad. The possibilities of the trip appealed to him; and Jimmie was only too pleased that he should be interested, for it had been the consensus of opinion back home that Cummings would be a great engineer if he could let the booze alone.

The two men talked and planned until the gloomy shadows of the mountains crept over Fonseca, and the ships at anchor in the harbor below them began to twinkle with their red, green and yellow lights. Then they fondly bade each other good-night, just as they had so often done years before, on a certain college campus after football practice.

"Now don't get drunk over it, Charlie," cautioned Jimmie, as they left the Plaza. "Remember, I'll be looking for you early."

That evening, when Charlie Cummings was getting the last good sleep he knew he would get for two weeks, Jimmie Heath was enjoying the thrills of the Plaza by moonlight.

Most of the village lay below him, and the effect of the moonbeams on the ghostly white houses and the dark palms; the great black harbor beyond them with its twinkling lights and its wide stretch of moonlit ripples, all added much to his lonesomeness. He wished the company had played fair with Charlie; he wished he had never seen Fonseca; he wished Cummings had stayed up. And between each wish he called for more liquor; and there were more wishes and more liquor, until even the attentive waiter was in danger of losing count.

The next morning Cummings, refreshed from his long sleep, and as near to a cold bath as Fonseca permitted, started the day whistling. Looking very much like a big boy on a play donkey, and dragging two other of the diminutive animals behind him, he climbed the narrow street to Heath's hotel.

Jimmie Heath, with his panama set at an unruly angle and his white linen suit unduly wrinkled, came wavering uncertainly down the broad steps to meet him. A great idea was brewing in his drink-befuddled brain.

"Charlie," he hiccoughed, winking familiarly at the first little donkey, "I been drinking it over,—I—I mean thinking it over, yes, that's jus' what I mean,—thinking it over, and I think the company had no right to double-cross you. Therefore, of—what was it old Prexy used to say, oh, yes,—of my own free will and volition and without coercion, I turn it over to you. Here's papers, letter from me to company, telling them they're crooked. You go ahead, see the land and cable them your answer. I refuse absl—absl—I refuse abslutely to work for such a company." Jimmie smiled a broad grin of drunken generosity.

Cummings leaned his big frame heavily against the lead burro as he stroked his chin in indetermination. Why not? Liquor had taken several of his best chances away from him; why should it not give back one at least?

If Cummings had been allowed to lay awake on the chilly nights of the mountain trip to plan this chance, he would have been more ready to accept it. But to have this forced upon him without notice, called forth a certain latent honesty of his innermost self. He hesitated. It was but a moment of indecision, a day-dream that took him down the narrow street, across the blue harbor, past the dark green islands at its entrance, back to God's country, back to the land where these two in by-gone years had worked and played through their intimate college life. He decided against opportunity and turned slowly to his friend.

The moment of indecision had accom-

plished for Cummings what honor could not. Jimmie Heath was gone, and no amount of searching could find him. Cummings fumed and swore at the delay. The chance of success for one man was gradually becoming the chance of success for no man. Every minute would be needed to make the trip; Cummings, having time to argue with his honesty, decided that if he made the trip alone, he would share the glory with no drunkard.

After dinner, the big man unhitched his burros, and soon a white cloud of dust was moving slowly along between the two even lines of palm trees that marked the President's Highway, the highway that ran with great pomp and magnificence through suburbs, wandered aimlessly through the swamps, where the malarial fever hung like a dense bank of fog in the early twilight, and finally staggered a poor broken-backed ox-trail up the gloomy mountain side.

Jimmie's debauch lasted for two days, and when the poor boy regained his sobriety and realized what he had done, he straightway started on another, which rounded out the two weeks of Cummings's trip.

Cummings's expedition was a success from the very beginning. He mentally laid out his railroad as he went; the red hematite he found without difficulty; he made estimates, drew pictures, wrote reports, squinted continually through his Loche level, and turned back satisfied.

But two weeks in the saddle, sleep disturbed by wild dreams of busy mines, prosperous railroads and great ore docks, and a return trip through the fever belt with the haunting fear that each breath of fever-laden air might bring a lingering death to his run-down system, all this played havoc with Cummings.

Upon his arrival in Fonseca, the first thing he did was to stop his mud-bespattered, dust-covered outfit in front of the Plaza and proceed to begin where Heath had left off. Glass followed glass, until the saddle-sore, mind-wearied traveler became the gentleman of generosity that he always was in his cups.

The three burros were then headed for Heath's hotel, the swaying Cummings enjoying all the thrills of a returning Columbus. Heath stood on the same broad steps where Cummings had last seen him two weeks ago;—he was sober.

"Jimmie," hiccoughed the returning hero, as he slipped one foot over the little donkey's head and leaned forward like a football "sub" sitting on the side-line bench; "Jimmie, never let it be said that a Cummings played a fren' dirt'. Everythin's up there just as they say it is; here's plans, pictures and the papers you gave me. You can't argue with me, I refuse posit—positiz— I refuse positizively to keep 'em."

Jimmie's heart beat wildly as he held the papers. Why should he not take them; shouldn't whiskey give back what whiskey had stolen?

Yet Jimmie sober had as great a sense of honor as Cummings drunk. Here was Cummings, Jimmie figured, taking his trip through the fever belt, enduring the mountain hardships, merely to help him, Jimmie, and what was he doing now but planning to take advantage of his drunken generosity! Didn't Cummings deserve at least a share of the glory; shouldn't he be allowed to build the mighty enterprise that he had made possible?

In the end this reasoning prevailed. Honor won; but while it was still throttling temptation, Cummings took time by the forelock and departed. He clattered down the narrow street toward the wharves and cheap taverns, swaying perilously on one burro and driving the other two before him like sheep. When Jimmy, hesitating no longer, opened his mouth to call him back, Cummings was beyond hearing. Presently he and his burros disappeared around a corner at the foot of the hill.

"Oh, dammit," said Jimmy Heath, "if I was only drunk now, I'd go after him and offer him a job. But that would be risky wouldn't it? I guess I'd better stay off the stuff for good."

Then he went around to the cable office to send his report to the Consolidated. He could settle with Cummings another day.

SUNK BY A FLOATING MINE

BY CHARLES LEROY EDSON

A jump from a fifteen dollar job at the cigar stand in the Union Depot, Kansas City, to a mine superintendent's job at Half Moon Mountain, Arkansas, is a flying start toward prosperity; but from there on, the trail has a tendency to wander and is fully as rocky as any other route.

I'LL tell you why I quit my job at the cigar counter; there's no secret about it. I quit my fifteen-a-week to take up the million-a-minute line. Get-rich-quick was the slogan; that's why I resigned on one day's notice. It has to be done fast. Getting-rich-quick by slow degrees is as great an absurdity as for a burglar to jump across the air shaft in two jumps. You've got to make it on the first jump or you drop out of the picture.

All my fellow clerks in the depot were turning plutocrats through various freaks of the war. Large fortunes were being much worn that summer even by the lower classes. Jake Pell, the peanut butcher on the Colorado Flyer, came in from his run one day, turned in his stock of chewing gum, unsold best sellers, and resigned. He had just cashed in the old homestead down near Joplin, Mo., for a cool two hundred thousand. It had been valued at seven hundred before the war, but when zinc ore rose from fourteen dollars to one hundred and ten a ton due to the boom in munitions, the old farm became valuable. The next day Alex Bergoff quit his twelve-dollar-a-week job in the news-stand and announced that he had decided to end it all by going back to New York and getting rich, too. Yes, casually, just like that. Yawned and said he guessed he'd go out and get rich, as a fellow would say he guessed he'd go out and get a cup of coffee and a piece of pie. Next I heard from him he had an office at 120 Broadway and a checking account of eighty-seven thousand dollars in the Chase National Bank. He had used his knowledge of Russian methods to become a broker in war munitions. He was getting ten per cent on all orders placed by the Russians for American-made shrapnel, and was also exporting dollar safety razors by parcel post to Russia where he got five dollars apiece for them, thereby making a profit of two dollars a head on every soldier in the Czar's army. You see, when the French commanders forbade the Poilu to grow beards, the Russians, who get all their styles from France, decided to harvest their whiskers, too. There are more soldiers in Russia than there are doorkeepers at a Democratic national convention, you know, so you can get an idea of how big a field Alex had found to make hay in, and you can come to a realization of why, six months later, with the aid of Jake Pell, friend Alex was able to buy outright the Kansas City, Ozark and Southern railroad. Not that it's the longest railroad in the world at that.

Of course it didn't nettle me any to see a poor news butch like Jake and a poorer depot news-stand clerk like Alex, turn coal-oil Johnnies in six months, and buy one of the railroads running out of this very depot. It amazed me, I'll admit. Talk about your Arabian Nights. Why, Aladdin's wonderful lamp looks like a cheap cigar lighter in comparison. These boys were my best chums, too, Jake and Alex, and now they are rich plutocrats. Of course they didn't turn snobs; those boys didn't look down on me a bit because I was still passing the Havanas over the counter for fifteen dollars a week. But I was too darn good a democrat to embarrass a couple of regular guys by staying poor when big fortunes was the correct style for working-class people. I'm strong for equality. So I told the bunch: "Boys,

I'll go out and get rich, too. We've been pals in poverty and hard times, and I'll not desert you now that you've joined the predatory rich. To show you my heart's right, I'm going out and cop a barrel of mazuma, too, and we'll still be comrades in the higher financial circles."

That afternoon my opportunity came. It approached in the guise of an Ozark Hill Billy. He bashfully edged up to the cigar-stand and said he was famishing for a "bait of tobacker" and didn't have a cent. He had the inevitable black slouch hat, hollow cheeks and billy-goat whiskers of the Arkansas hill gentry. He had come to Kansas City to buy mining tools to develop the mineral prospects of his own farm, and on the train he had met some congenial strangers. He had matched pennies with them, and when they landed at the Union station, the confidence men had his three hundred and sixty dollars and he had the experience plus an appetite and an empty purse. I made him a present of a ten-cent plug of Mule Ear and told him to go into the lunch-room and order a big job of interior decoration with the classic egg-and-ham motif predominating. I stood by to endorse his check at the cashier's counter. He fell to the grub in a way that reminded me of the question: "What three foods does the human system require?" and the school-boy's answer: "Breakfast, dinner and supper." Uncle Casper ate the food he was needing, and it was three meals telescoped together with one epitaph to cover 'em all at the cash register. So that was the beginning of our financial partnership, and that afternoon I resigned as a cigar salesman and became a mine superintendent.

The next day Uncle Caspar Paugh and I were rattling up into the Arkansas mountains on the Kansas City, Ozark and Southern. It runs over the Pittsburg and Gulf rails to Monett, Mo., and then takes to the logging trails. The railroad is so jolty that passengers are advised to upholster their teeth with either tobacco or chewing gum, otherwise the management will not be responsible for dentistry destroyed in transit. This was the railroad that an English syndicate had thrown on the market because their capital was needed for munitions, and my depot pals, Jack and Alex, had bought with their new-found wealth. Now I was riding over their railroad on a "slow train through Arkansas" to get rich fast. I had invested three hundred and fifty dollars in an undivided half interest in old man Paugh's farm, and he had bought drills, crow-bars, shovels and dynamite, and we were equipped to dig for anything. Or rather, *he* was equipped to do the digging —I had already dug up about all I had.

When we reached Half Moon Mountain I coughed the cinders of travel from my lungs and inhaled the mountain ozone. You can't beat that country for blue sky and beautiful scenery. It is a land where "every prospect pleases, and only man is vile." When we reached the Paugh clearing and gazed on the ancestral shack, my heart fell. What a habitation it was! If a fellow should dive off the Kansas City dump into the Missouri river he'd come up with a better house than that clinging around his neck. It looked like a two-bit dressing sack after its third trip to the laundry. Mrs. Paugh sat on the stoop with a snuff stick between her lips. She was contentedly basking in the spring sunshine, barefooted and speechless. No greetings were exchanged. But the old lady hoisted an eyelid and glanced slantwise at me with the expression of a mean pup that knows he isn't going to like the stranger. I knew right then that the barefooted lady wouldn't bark, but she'd bite.

The Paughs were well equipped with the Uncle Tom's Cabin stuff. Hounds, hounds, hounds everywhere. They had more hounds than ever chased Eliza across the ice. If that family had given a noon-day parade, they would have been more than an hour passing a given point, and if the given point had been a tree with a cat in it, they never would have got past it.

Paugh walked into the open door of the hut and I slouched in after him, trundling my grip and feeling ashamed of myself for wearing socks and carrying a change of linen. I was afraid they'd look on it as casting reflections on their humble and democratic mode of life.

I was hungry enough to eat stewed carrots, and I glanced about the room like a spy from the food dictator's office investigating the ham shortage in Westphalia. The table was spread, and I took an inventory of their Tiffany bric-a-brac at a wink. They had three cracked china cups, none of them mates. A bone-handled butcher knife, a paring knife, and a silver knife, was their spread of cutlery. The table was covered with oil-cloth, instead of linen, because oil-cloth doesn't waste the sorghum molasses, being non-absorbent. The Paughs must once have been up in the world, for they had an exquisite silver sugar bowl with vines and cupids in bas-relief, the design matching the one lone ornamental silver knife. Something about the lay-out indicated the presence of a girl. That gave a flicker of heart interest. I sized up the situation quick as an adding machine: they had seventeen dogs, a Mary Pickford daughter and baked 'possum and corn pone three times a day.

Paugh and I sat down to the table, and while the old woman was dishing up the dinner, along came Rose. She was a beauty; she was a cross between a woodland sunbeam and an Elberta peach blossom. After I had given her the "close up" I decided to stick till the end of the reel. She was the wild, woodsy, violet-like creature that a city man would fall for even if the fall included a high dive off the Woolworth tower with nothing to save him from a bump except seven imps of the imagination holding a life net woven of the cobwebs of fancy. At the very sight of her I turned poet and began thinking:

Blink to me only with thine eyes,
And I will blink with mine.

Her eyes played on me a moment like a ray of turquoise light, and I almost went over backward as if I had been hit on the chest by the full torrent of honeymoons that plunges endlessly over Niagara Falls. Her hair was the burnt umber of a sweet gum's autumn foliage and her eyes were April pools of blue-mirrored skies darkened with reeds around the margin. The swaying of her uncorseted young body and the flicker of life about her mobile mouth made me resolve to be in the picture till the last scene and be doing the big lip reading act in the fade out. I had come into the mountains to find silver and zinc, and here was fairy gold. These old people, storm-driven back into the rocky gulch of life, had brought their treasure with them. She was a full-lipped briar-rose, budding and blooming afar from the trampled way.

Well, the days went by, and our mining operations proceeded to the tune of coming prosperity, with hope as a dancing partner to happiness. The Paughs and I mixed fine, except perhaps the misses. She was of a queer turn of character and highly non-talkative. Either she disliked the cigarette habit I carried around, or else she didn't like the face I carried it in. I'm not a real cigarettist. I smoke only three or four a day and don't inhale them. Mrs. Paugh, with her snuff dipping, had the tobacco habit in a form ten times as noxious as I did. But you never can account for prejudices. I saw women down there who smoked cob pipes and were making fun of other women for chewing tobacco. In church, though, the tobacco-chewing ladies had the best of it, as smoking wasn't allowed. I took Rose to meeting one night and thought I'd wait for her on the outside, but the ladies spat such torrents out the window during services that in self-protection I had to come into the fold and be counted for the Lord.

This wild country with its odd ways fascinated me, and inwardly I resolved that it would take an earthquake to jar me loose from the romantic mountains and a cyclone to drive me back to any kind of city life after the first sip of the honey lips of my Rose of Arcadia. I worked at the mine all day, ate corn pone and "sogrum 'lasses" for supper and loved Rose by moonlight. Sure I had opposition; I'll admit it. No opposition, no conflict, and without conflict, no story. So I'm telling you; his name was Lum Posline, to rhyme with clothesline. He was

a big stick. I guess his first name, Lum, stood for "lumber." That's the kind of a stick he was, not the big stick that means war. I tried to pick a fight out of him, hoping it would help me with Rose, but this Lum had an eye for peace as big as Henry Ford.

Rose had never cared for Lum Posline, but her mother was for him stronger than sauerkraut. And Rose didn't have any more chance of speaking her true sentiments than an Austrian sympathizer while being shaved by an Italian barber. The old lady cooked shortening break and chicken dumplings every time that Lum came to dinner, and dished up pear preserves and boiled cider, but she always put so much soda in my pone that it tasted like the soap course at an Eskimo banquet. And my coffee was so thin that it tasted like a splash in the face on a muddy road. I always expected her to cook up a conjurer's dose of black spiders and burnt lizard's tail and slip me these rustic knockout drops in my Java some night.

Meanwhile Paugh and I drilled away and dug, dug, dug, until we had uncovered the vein of ore in the hillside. Neither of us knew beans about minerals. We didn't know whether we were digging for gold, silver, copper, platinum or linoleum. If we had struck a pure vein of custard pie we might have rejected it because we thought we were digging for mince. When we got already to put in our first big blast, I suggested to my partner that we'd better pause and define our terms as gents do before they plunge into the matched debate. I thought we ought to agree as to what we were digging for before we touched off the dynamite, then after the smoke cleared away we could tell better whether we had got it or not. But Paugh thought we had better just go it blind, then we would be in better shape to accept whatever luck the gods bestowed. Everything was ready for the big blowup. I had spooned out a hole and put in the dynamite stick with a giraffe-neck attachment. The old man lighted the fuse and we beat it through the brush like a coon chase and hid behind the black oaks a quarter of a mile away until she detonated. Say, when that blast went off, it sounded as if one of those submarines, this means U-boats, had come up from a subterranean sea through a crawfish hole and had torpedoed half the United States off the map. It seemed to take hours for the smoke and dust to clear away from the mine. Pebbles, rocks, clay balls and pieces of oak leaves rained all over Half Moon Mountain. When we approached and looked at our hole, I thought sure I saw starlight on the other side and discerned the chief mogul of the Chinese Empire-Republic under a pepper tree with a geisha girl eating the midnight chop-suey. Half the western hemisphere seemed to be missing, and that hole actually looked as big as the cavity feels to your tongue after your first tooth is pulled. The debris from our little Fourth of July celebration was rock, ore, mud, slime and satisfaction.

We spent the rest of the afternoon pawing over the treasure trove we had jarred loose. We had not only sticks and stones but fossil bones from the buried past. There were the petrified vertebræ of the willopus-wallopus, the prehistoric flying lizard, and other miocene, pliocene and seldomcene animals. But best of all, we had about a truck load of gold ore. Stock in our mine advanced three kilometers above par on a front of three hundred yards. I wouldn't have sold my prospects right then for all the priceless rubies ever stolen from the eye of a Hindu god in the all-story magazines.

"What are you going to do with this ore?" I asked. "Shall we take it to the store and buy crackers and sardines, or shall we get Uncle Sam to stamp an eagle on it before we do any high flying?"

"Send it to an assayer," Paugh mumbled, picking up more of the shining lumps.

That night, when I told Rose about my good fortune, she didn't seem near as glad about it as she might have been expected to. I told her my future was assured, that I would build a log bungalow on Half Moon and she should be my little mocking bird. I asked her to name what she wanted most and I would buy

it. She asked me for an ice-cream soda and a pair of dancing pumps, the two things that can't be had in the mountains. I said all I wanted was a kiss. I took it, but her counter attack was too darn weak to be worth mentioning in this communique.

There was a box supper and a literary entertainment at the schoolhouse that night. I went with Rose and blew my money like a day laborer buying soup at five cents a plate. What did I care about expense? I was the Diamond Jim Brady of the crowd. As a tired business man, who had just done a million dollar business since lunch, I was there for a rest, amusement and relaxation. Well, that big hick of a Lum was there, too. He was on the program for an oration. His subject was "Home." He had learned it out of a bush league book and he mispronounced half the words. His rube gestures, whining drawl, and general get-up was immense. I've seen rube acts in vaudeville, but nothing that could touch him. I told him that if he would go to the city and see Martin Beck, he could get booked over the big time for a hundred dollars a week just to recite that oration. I nearly laughed my head off.

But Rose seemed to be offended because I kidded him. From that day she cottoned to King Rube Lum and cooled toward me. I guess she wanted Lum to make good on the vaudeville suggestion and shame me for my smartness, for she did everything she could on the quiet to induce him to go to the city as I suggested. I helped all I could by telling where to go and whom to see to get the booking, but finally, of course, it fell through. Meanwhile, the old lady began trying to rush things to get Rose married to that bean-pole of a Lum before the assayer's returns came in to tell me I was elected to Millionaire Row. Of course, I didn't think my Rose was mercenary, but that hundred-dollar-a-week stuff that I had told her about Lum seemed to have caused some kind of a tide to set in in his direction. It puzzled me how any girl could think of marrying that red-necked crane in the same breath with me. I don't want to hand myself any bouquets on looks, but actually, that scarecrow Lum was seven feet high, and when he drank coffee out of a saucer his Adam's apple went up and down three stories like the freight elevator in the Flatiron building.

One day I saw old man Paugh coming up the trail from the postoffice at Oak Flat, as it wound like a thread of dirty sackcloth up the creek valley to the mountain top. He had the same beaten and busted expression he wore the time I met him at the cigar stand begging for a chew of tobacco. He carried an open letter in his hand, and when he offered it to me he seemed surprised in a sort of dopey manner because I didn't take it.

"I've read that letter often enough to know it by heart," I said.

And then I had to explain to the poor old codger that I had read it on his face. I laughed and patted him on the shoulder. I felt worse than he did, but we city guys always kid everything. The old man had merely lost an imaginary fortune, while I had lost a real treasure I could lay my hand on. That was the first thought that came to me,—Rose will never be mine. The gold ore came second; it was pyratese of silver, or some such thing, and the letter said that if it could be found in vast quantities close to rail transportation, it would be valuable. We had scratched clear down until we tickled the toes of the toy-footed women of China, and we couldn't gather up half a ton of the stuff. Old Paugh sat around like a Greenwich Village yogi with stomach-ache, who had gone into the silences. I was bluer than a cargo of cobalt and nothing in the world mattered any more. In a situation like that somebody ought to chuckle, just for the artistic combination of the stage picture, and somebody did. A peal of girlish laughter broke from the tobacco-stained lips of the old lady and rippled through the opera score like quicksilver traversing the thermometer on a sudden drop to zero. I could have choked her to death, but it wouldn't have done justice to my feelings, so what was the use?

But there was Rose! She must have

really felt bad for me, because she came over and put her arms about me sympathetically and on my paralyzed face she pressed a warm kiss of commiseration. What an angel I would have had if I had won her! Actually, the fact that she couldn't love me made her feel so sorry for me that she almost loved me out of pity. The sex is a mystery, and I don't pretend to be the guy that understands women.

Lum rode thirty-five miles over the mountains to the country seat to get the license, and the old lady announced that the wedding would take place a week from that date. I wrote to Kansas City for a job at the cigar counter in the same old depot, and shined my shoes with stove polish preparatory to a trip back to the tawdry city. The old man sat around with his head between his hands, but he roused up at corn pone time, and he never missed taking the hounds for their daily "run in the park."

Friday night there was a letter under my plate and, in opening the envelope, I got the impression it had been opened before and sealed again. If the old lady was censoring my mail, I guess she was satisfied, for this letter was calling me back to my old job in the Union depot, and marked the end of a dream of freedom, wealth and Rose.

The next day I packed my baggage and lugged it down that endless trail to the railroad which belonged to my friends Jake and Alex. It was a sick and beaten man that bought the return transportation from those plutocrats. I had not sought out Rose to say goodbye, for fear I might pull on the tremolo stop and do some sob stuff that was unworthy a game loser.

The little old train came coughing along, and while I was climbing aboard, old man Paugh rode up on a frothing mule and told me that Lum Posline was beating it to the justice's office to get a warrant for my arrest. They would try to catch the train at Bee Branch and serve it on me. He was still shouting instructions into my bewildered ears when the train pulled out. I was puzzling over what charge they had brought against me, and couldn't figure it out. The train stopped at Bee Branch, and I could see a long stretch of the county road from the car window. Just as the train started again I saw Lum and the constable come galloping along in a cloud of dust. I stared at them until the train left them far behind, and then I turned and saw somebody standing before me. It was Rose. She sat down in the seat beside me and kissed me.

She told me the answer to the riddle. She had ceased to love me when I struck gold and settled down to a life on Half Moon Mountain. She had begun to care for Lum when his vaudeville prospects loomed up, but when that faded she saw there was nothing to Lum. Then when my pestiferous gold mine collapsed and I got my old job back in the Union depot at Kansas City (she had opened my letter to learn it) she knew at once and forever where her heart really lay, and she had decided to elope with me. Her note conveying that information was what had set her mother and Lum and the law on our trail.

Some girls marry for money and some marry for social position, but my woodland Rose was marrying for city life. Whichever suitor would be surest to abandon country life was the one which would capture her wavering heart.

Being a cigar clerk in a dusty, noisy railway terminal isn't rated anywhere compared with a country home on Half Moon Mountain, at least, we city fellows don't think so. But did you ever stop to consider how grand and glorious a city clerk can look in the eyes of a girl who was born and raised in the sticks? A Union depot clerk looks to your wild Tess-o'-the-Storm Country like a bishop and a general in one. Many of us fail to reach our dearest goal, like the old French peasant who never had seen Carcassone. And I had failed in that direction too, but when the conductor yelled, "Kansas City Union Station, everybody change cars," it sounded just like that to me, but in the pretty, eager ears of Rose, —God bless her heart,—that conductor man was calling: "All out for Carcassone."

FUZZ

BY JOE BLEDSOE

Fuzz is a globe-trotting dog. He and his master make a shabby and altogether depressing picture, but they are genteel nevertheless. They eat their crackers without jam, and, like Sam Weller, don't care for beans when they can get liver and onions.

GREENY sat on a sill in the fast gathering shadows underneath the water tank and hummed to himself. The call of the road was strong upon him, for it was the time of year when all "bodom" becomes troubled with that peculiar malady known as "Itchy soles." And yet another motive even stronger than this natural call was urging him to put distance between himself and the twinkling lights of the town at his left.

In the early hours of the afternoon, while lolling in the protecting shade of a string of empties across the tracks from the depot, he had glanced for one startled moment into the great brown eyes of a figure that carried him back to his bygone days of respectability.

Fuzz, who had wandered from his master's side over toward the depot, had attracted the attention of a child on the platform. Good-naturedly, he had submitted to the boy's fumbling caresses, and when he had turned to retrace his steps, the child, loath to let him go, had trundled along at his side, stumbling awkwardly over the steel rails. Greeny, in a half doze, had been unaware of his dog's protegé until a low, reproving voice, addressed to the child, fell upon his ear.

With a mighty start, he had bounced to a sitting posture. For the space of a second, they had gazed into each other's eyes. He had seen a flash of suppressed merriment in the brown orbs at his sudden perturbation, followed instantly by a dazed, wondering look, half doubt, half scorn. Slowly she had gathered up the child and recrossed the tracks to the depot, leaving Greeny staring in dumb wonder at her receding form. A hundred yards up the track, he had turned and looked back. The young woman, with the child still in her arms, stood gazing absently up the track in his direction.

Now, as he sat waiting for his train, the tune on his lips grew stronger as he endeavored to drown the haunting memory of that fleeting glance of scorn which had been apparent in the eyes of the girl whom he had met earlier in the day.

Suddenly he straightened and glanced quickly up the track. A low, distant rumble reached his ears, while through the soft twilight of the early spring evening, he made out a dull red glow painted against the sky. "Get ready, Fuzz. Here she comes," he drawled, as he rose and shuffled back into the deeper shadows of the tank supports. Fuzz rose lazily, went through the motion of wagging his absent tail, and stalked over to his master's side.

Greeny slouched against a beam and waited. He let his gaze wander idly over the myriad of twinkling lights in the town below. Grimly, he clutched the lone ten-cent piece deep down in the cavernous pocket of his ill-fitting trousers, as his gaze fell upon a certain electric sign ostentatiously displayed down near the tracks. "Cheaper than the Jungles. Beds, Ten Cents," he read, skeptically. With a scornful curl of his unshaven lip, he again turned his gaze in the direction of the approaching train.

As the glare of the headlight began to penetrate their place of concealment, Fuzz became impatient and, with a soft whine, licked his master's hand.

"Easy, Fuzz; this may not be our kind," admonished Greeny, placing a restraining hand on the dog's ugly head.

As they stood for a moment revealed by the rays of the powerful headlight, they made a grotesque and droll picture. Upon the begrimed visage of the man there sprouted a wild tangle of unpruned whiskers. On his right foot, he wore a low, button shoe, while his left was encased in a rusty, run-down-at-heel boot several sizes too large. His trousers' legs were badly frayed at the bottom, and much too short. But what they lacked in length, they made up a thousand-fold in waistband.

For a belt he used a fish cord, doubled many times and drawn tightly about his waist through the belt loops of the manifold trousers. His coat was "swallow-tail" with one tail missing, while the sleeves, in marked contrast to the legs of his trousers, dangled down over his finger-tips. For a hat, he wore, jauntily perched on the wrong side of his head, a greasy, dove-colored derby of the "ram's horn" variety with a dented and battered crown.

With this crude setting for a background, there appeared round his neck a gorgeous green tie, immaculate and neatly tied. Being the only thing apparently clean about him, it stood out in bold relief against the dilapidated appearance of his other apparel, commanding instant attention.

Fuzz, as far as appearance was concerned, proved to be as poor a representative of his race as his master was of his. His coat was a dirty drab color, thin and scraggy. The hair on his body resembled thin fuzz and persisted in turning the wrong way. Half of one ear was missing, the result of a fierce battle, while his tail was conspicuous only by its absence. Indeed, it seemed as though a joint or two of his vertebra had gone with the tail.

There was a reason for Greeny's choice of conveyance over the road. Fuzz was a wonderful dog, but there were some means of locomotion connected with this method of wandering that even he could not master. And where Fuzz couldn't ride Greeny wouldn't.

As the iron monster ground grudgingly to a pause opposite the water tank, Greeny noted with satisfaction the long line of dark, silent objects stretching away behind it.

"Come on, dawg. She's a freight," he whispered laconically, as he started to shuffle guardedly up the track. Half way up the line, he discovered a box-car with its door shoved partly open. But before he could take advantage of the opportunity offered, a light suddenly bobbed into view across the track.

Silently the two slunk out of sight over the edge of the embankment. They listened to the crunch of the "shack's" footsteps on the cinders as he moved down toward the engine. When the sound had died away, Greeny rose and glanced furtively about. Another light was moving down the track in their direction. Evidently the "shacks" were on the alert for skulking "Knights of the road."

The light came within a hundred feet of their hiding-place and stopped. At the same time, the signal which sends a thrill of anticipation coursing through the souls of such as they, barked out, clear and sharp, on the night air. Out of the tail of his eye, Greeny saw the "shack" give an answering high ball.

Seizing Fuzz by the good ear, he pointed toward the box-car, which was beginning to move. "See that 'side-door Pullman'? That's ours; but we can't get 'er here, 'cause that 'shack' back there has growed to the ground. But we'll hook 'er on the other side of the tank. Understand?"

Swiftly they skirted the water tank and, with a deftness born of long experience, Greeny seized the side of the open door and swung himself gracefully inside the moving car. As he released his hold on the door, a heavy body struck him in the bend of his knees and bowled him over on the car floor. Scrambling up, he seized Fuzz's head between his two hands and chuckled softly.

"Yer jumped a little quick that time, Fuzz. But yer didn't want to take chances on gettin' left, did yer? That was some jump, and you're some dawg." Slowly he wagged the dog's head back and forth. "Do you know, Fuzz, that I've got a hunch, a hunch that some day you'll pull off somethin'—somethin' grand?"

"What's all the chatter about, bo?" suddenly came in a gruff voice from the

farther end of the car. Greeny gave a start of surprise. Fuzz peered in the direction of the voice and growled menacingly. Presently a ray of light illuminated the darkened car. Out from behind a stack of hay bales in one corner issued the owner of the voice.

He moved over toward the two in the center of the car, a flashlight held guardedly in one hand. Evidence of the "road" was stamped strongly upon his person, from the shaggy, unkempt hair, down to the rusty, out-at-toe shoes. As he shambled forward, surprise and wonder shone from his green-gray eyes.

"Say, bo, you're a qua'r gink. I've seen a good many strange sights since I took to the road, but I'm hanged if yer ain't the first feller I ever see take up with a dorg for a road pal."

"He's got your kind beat a country block," retorted Greeny, bristling.

"Oh, don't git sore," returned the other, affably, trying to be friendly. "Come to think of it," he went on, "seems like I have heard jungle talk about a bo, over on t'other side of the hump, who traveled with a hound this way. His monaker was Greeny, I believe. Ever hear of 'im?"

Greeny nodded. He seemed bored by the other's recital.

The man recently from the hay continued, "My monaker's White Line Charlie. What might yours be, friend?"

"It might be Whiskey Jake, but it ain't," returned Greeny, sourly. He had taken a sudden dislike to his fellow passenger, and took no precaution to conceal the fact.

In spite of this rebuff, White Line Charlie persisted in being friendly. He dragged a bale of hay in front of the open door, where the night breeze wafted in, and invited Greeny to a seat. But the latter declined.

As his eye fell upon the lank form of Fuzz, curled contentedly upon the car floor, he suddenly burst into a loud guffaw.

"What's the joke?" inquired Greeny, the hint of a sneer in his voice.

"I jest happened to think—"

"How wonderful," broke in the other, sarcastically.

White Line Charlie ignored the interruption. "That hound will git his'n when the 'shack' sees 'im. Why, he'll kick his durned head off."

An ominous glint shone from Greeny's eyes. "I don't think he will," he informed the other, brusquely.

Suddenly the rays of the flashlight were focused on Greeny's gorgeous tie. "Some neckgear you've got there, pal," exclaimed White Line Charlie, reaching out a grimy, soot-smeared hand.

Greeny backed away, touchily. "Never mind," he admonished testily, waving the outstretched hand roughly aside. "It's a breach of good manners to comment upon a fellow's wearing apparel to his face, anyhow," he continued loftily.

"Been readin' George Washington's rules on good behavior, ain't yer?" sneered the other, showing signs of choler for the first time during their brief acquaintance.

"I don't have to read nobody's rules on good behavior to give riff-raff like you points," retorted Greeny.

"Riff-raff!" snorted White Line Charlie. "Why, what do ye call yerself, I'd like to know? Yer don't look to me like one of John D's favorites."

"Jest the same, I'm above herdin' with bindlestiffs of your caliber," replied Greeny, casting a contemptuous glance in the direction of the other's roll of dirty blankets.

As the argument waxed warmer, both failed to notice the diminishing speed of the train. They were brought to a sudden realization of their precarious position when a lighted lantern was suddenly thrust in at the car door, followed by a burly "shack." White Line Charlie made a ludicrous attempt to dodge behind the hay. Greeny stood still, while Fuzz rose lazily, stretched himself, and wagged his absent tail.

The trainman wasted no time in preliminaries. "What yer ridin' on, bo?" he asked tersely, addressing Greeny.

"Only my nerve," replied Greeny, laconically.

"It ain't enough, pal, on this road. Say, is that your hound?" he inquired with a frown, as he caught sight of Fuzz.

"That's him, but he's no ordinary hound," answered the dog's master.

"Oh, I beg your pardon; Scotch Collie or St. Bernard?" asked the "shack" contemptuously.

"Jest plain dawg, but he's got lots of sense at that," returned Greeny proudly. Placing a hand fondly on the dog's back, he continued, "Some day this dawg is goin' to pull off somethin'—somethin' grand."

"He don't look it," retorted the other, skeptically.

"Here, you, jest wait a minute," entreated Greeny, "an' I'll show yer somethin' worth seein'." The request seemed rather inopportune, as the brakeman had shown no inclination to depart.

Suddenly giving Fuzz's ear a slight tweak, Greeny cried softly, "Mooch old dawg, mooch!" For some reason or other the animal hesitated. Perhaps his instinct warned him that the quarry in the box-car was hopeless. Greeny repeated the command. This time there was a note of sternness in his tone.

In a moment, Fuzz transformed himself into another creature. Slowly he reared upon his hind feet and gently lifted his master's greasy derby from his head. A look of utter dejection and despair had suddenly appeared in his big sorrowful eyes. His back humped perceptibly, while one foot was held clear of the floor in seeming agony.

With the derby held firmly in his mouth, he hobbled painfully over to White Line Charlie and gazed up into his face with a look of mute appeal in his great, hungry eyes.

In spite of his recent fear of the "shack," the tramp guffawed loudly. A moment Fuzz waited, and then turned dejectedly to the gaping trainman and repeated the performance. He waited longer here, but finally turned, with a melancholy air, to his master.

Without hesitation, Greeny went down into his cavernous pocket and fished up his lone dime. With a lordly gesture, he tossed it into the battered hat. Then, after a slight pause, he seized the derby, deftly scooped the dime from its crown, and replaced it upon his head.

Taking Fuzz's head between his two hands, he weaved it gently back and forth. "Good work, Fuzz. Yer sure ar' some dawg."

"Say, bo! You sure got that cur trained," exclaimed the brakeman, casting admiring glances at Fuzz.

"See this dime?" Greeny held up the worn piece of silver. "I allus keep it about my person. When nobody else contributes, I do, to kind o' keep up the dawg's ambition. Get me?" The other nodded.

"Well, I guess your little exhibition's good for a hat check on this train to the end of my division," he muttered, turning his attention to the other occupant of the car.

It took him less than two minutes to dispose of White Line Charlie's case. Being either unable or disinclined to "produce," the tramp was invited, in no gentle tones, to "throw out his feet."

As the train gathered momentum again, Greeny had the grim satisfaction of seeing his fellow passenger shoulder his roll of blankets and "hit the ball o' mud." Thereupon he sought the solace of the hay.

How long he had been asleep, Greeny never knew. He was suddenly awakened by a rude jolt and felt himself hurled violently against the side of the car. There followed a rending, splintering crash, succeeded by a moment of awful silence. When he rallied his scattered wits, he realized that he was lying face downward on the damp ground. He made an ineffectual attempt to rise. Some heavy object had his lower limbs securely pinioned to the earth. Suddenly he heard a low whine and felt the cold nose of his dog sniffing at the back of his neck. Turning on his side, he took Fuzz's head between his hands.

"Hello, Fuzz, old dawg; some wreck, ain't it? Yer hurt? No!" as Fuzz licked his hand.

An instant later a groan at his left attracted Greeny's attention. "Hello! Who's there?" he called loudly.

"It's me," came back in weak tones. Greeny recognized the brakeman's voice. "Hey, bo! What's happened? Yer hurt bad?"

"I'm nearly killed, but we ain't got no

time to jaw. Come over here. I want yer to take my lantern back and flag No. 8."

"Can't stake yer, pard," answered Greeny, flippantly. "I happen to be in the same boat as yerself."

The brakeman groaned aloud. "No. 8 will be here in less than three minutes and, comin' round that curve, she'll never see us in— My God!" he broke off, as far away up the track, there sounded the faint whistle of an approaching train.

"Where's the rest of the bunch?" inquired Greeny, an uncomfortable feeling beginning to traverse his backbone.

"Either dead or crippled. There's only the engine crew, the head 'shack' and the 'con,' besides ourselves. If there'd been any one left, he'd been round afore now," muttered the trainman despairingly.

Again the distant whistle sounded on the night air. Greeny placed his ear to the ground. He could distinguish a low, distant rumble, growing louder as the moments passed. Vainly he strove to extricate himself from the wreckage. After what seemed ages, he managed to free his right foot, but his left was wedged fast. Feverishly he worked, twisting from side to side in his mad endeavor. Only a sharp, stabbing pain in his leg rewarded his efforts. At last he gave up and flung his face flat upon the earth, pantingly listening to that ominous, ever increasing rumble, near enough now to cause the earth to tremble beneath his prostrate body.

Presently Fuzz whined and sniffed the back of his master's neck. The touch of the cold nose against his flesh affected Greeny like an electric shock. He raised his head suddenly and shouted, "Hey, there, you! Where's that lantern?"

"Here." Feebly the brakeman waved the light.

"Go get it, Fuzz," commanded Greeny. Obediently the dog obeyed.

Placing one arm around Fuzz's scraggy neck, Greeny muttered hurriedly, "Go, Fuzz; up the track; hold tight. No, no mooch," he explained, as the dog lifted one front foot. "Up the track, see," he exclaimed, waving his hand in the direction of the on-coming train.

Then as the whistle of the on-rushing monster shrilled out on the still night air, just around the curve, Greeny had the satisfaction of seeing Fuzz disappear up over the embankment, the bail of the lighted lantern held tightly between his teeth.

"What yer doin' now?" came weakly from the brakeman.

"Sendin' Fuzz to flag 'er," explained Greeny.

"Flag nothin'," came the low retort, and the "shack" relapsed into despairing silence.

The ensuing moments seemed ages to Greeny. He had unbounded confidence in Fuzz, but this was a new experience for him. Even if the dog understood the import of his errand, would the engineer of No. 8 interpret the oddly given signal correctly? Would he bring his train to a stop before it dashed around that sharp, deadly curve, upon the hidden mass of wreckage?

Again he placed his face close against the earth. The din of the coming train sounded like the roar of a cataract in his ears. Slowly the conviction that Fuzz had failed, took shape in his brain, and he muttered, "Poor old dawg. He didn't savvy. I ought ter—" Suddenly he broke off and jerked himself half erect. From a short distance up the track, there came a shrill whistle.

Greeny heard a series of sharp, staccato notes, as the engine sent its signal of warning hurtling out on the morning breeze; heard the scream of brakes against steel drivers as the engineer released the air.

By a superhuman effort, he raised himself sufficiently to glimpse the track above. The train had partly rounded the sharp curve and the rays of the mighty headlight lit up the scene below with a brilliant glare. What caught and riveted Greeny's attention, was the figure of Fuzz, racing madly along between the rails in front of the slowing train, the bail of a lantern held tightly between his teeth. Even as he gazed, No. 8 shrieked to a standstill scarce a train length from the wrecked freight. Greeny heaved a deep sigh and dropped back upon the ground.

When the engineer of No. 8 reached the shattered box-car he found Greeny propped upon one elbow with his arm

around the thin, scraggy neck of his dog, murmuring low words of love and pride as he shook the dog's head gently back and forth. From Fuzz's mouth, there still swung idly by the bail, a lighted lantern.

"Say, bo! That your dog?" Silently Greeny nodded. Gently the man stroked Fuzz's ugly head with a greasy, gloved hand. "I've had some queer signals dished up to me during my time on the road," he went on, "but this one tonight's got 'em all skinned. It worked like a charm though. He's sure some dog, bo." After a moment's pause, he continued, "The luckiest wreck I ever saw, too. Nobody hurt very bad except the fire-boy, and he'll pull through all right. Engineer knocked batty for a while. The 'con' and the other 'shack' shut up in the up-ended caboose without a scratch. Nobody left to flag us but the hound, here, and believe me, he's done it to a queen's taste. Here, everybody!" he suddenly shouted, as the curious passengers from No. 8 gathered around. Briefly, he explained the situation for the benefit of those not already familiar with the facts, concluding with the remark, "Now this gentleman may be in need of a little financial assistance at present, and I believe it about the right time for all who can to donate."

While speaking, the engineer had removed his cap with one hand, while with the other, he fumbled in the bib pocket of his grease-smeared overalls. "Here's a starter, friends," as he dropped a bill into the crown of his cap. "Who'll be next?" he asked, starting around the circle.

Just then, Greeny spoke. Some long dormant germ of self-respect deep down in his breast suddenly sprang into action. "Me and my dawg don't want nothin' for savin' human life," he cried sharply. He was shocked at his own speech. He could not wholly grasp the meaning of that awakening spark in his breast. It seemed to him as if some inner being, over which he had no control, had uttered the words, merely using him for a mouthpiece.

The engineer paused in surprise. This was a novel experience,—a bo refusing a donation. Finally he spoke. "This is different from a touch, bo. Can't you see these people just want to make you a little present in acknowledgment of what you did for them?"

Greeny quickly swallowed his compunction. "Well, if there's got to be a contribution, let's have it taken in the regular way." Quickly he gave Fuzz the command. This time the dog needed no second bidding, but almost toppled his master over in his eager reach for the soiled derby.

At the first sound of Greeny's voice, a figure in the crowd of curious passengers had started slightly and shifted her position in order to obtain a better view of the speaker.

While Fuzz was making the rounds, to the great delight and admiration of the rest of the group, she suddenly stepped forward within the rays of No. 8's headlight. As she focused him with her gaze, Greeny beheld once more that look of mingled wonder and scorn in the great brown eyes. For a moment, he seemed to shrink from the clear gaze riveted upon him. Then suddenly he shrugged his shoulders with an indifferent air, folded his arms across his tattered chest, and gazed stonily back into the eyes of the girl with a defiant stare.

Three feet away from his master's outstretched hand on the return trip, Fuzz suddenly stopped in dismay. One side of the crown of Greeny's derby had given way. Willing hands helped them gather up the scattered coin. When the last one was stowed safely away in his capacious pocket, Greeny swung aboard No. 8. Gingerly he sat down upon the cushioned seat, Fuzz at his side. Remembering the look in the eyes of the girl, he fished from his hip pocket a soiled bandanna, and carefully placing every dollar of the late donation within its ample folds, tied the four corners securely together.

As the train began moving back toward Harper, the conductor strolled down the aisle of the car, and Greeny held the laden kerchief toward him. "Here, Con, take this stuff and give it back to the passengers. Fuzz and I don't want it." The conductor started to argue, but Greeny was determined. "Take it," he demanded. "If you can't return it to the parties who

gave it, turn it over to a society for the needy or somethin' of the sort, 'cause Fuzz and me would jest squander it useless like."

As the conductor reluctantly took the money and moved away, the girl with the brown eyes rose from her seat a few feet back and, with the look of contempt on her face changing to a sort of admiration, came forward and deliberately perched herself upon the arm of the seat occupied by Greeny and his dog.

Greeny glanced up for a fleeting instant, then stubbornly turned his gaze out of the car window.

"So it's you, is it?"

He thrilled anew at the sound of her voice.

"It's me," he answered shortly, gazing with unseeing eyes at the light of the coming day.

"What are you doing here?" she asked, after a pause.

"What are you doing here?" he countered, unconsciously dropping the slang of the road from his English.

"I have been visiting my sister in Stockton, and am on my way home," she informed him.

At the sound of the word "home," Greeny winced.

"What made you do it, anyway?" she continued, a little note of sadness creeping into her tone.

"Do what?" He feigned ignorance.

"You know what I mean."

He turned on her defiantly. "Say, Bess, that's a queer question for you to ask me. Don't you know that when a fellow like me loves a girl like you and loses her, he loses everything, even his self-respect?"

For a moment, the girl remained silent, gently stroking the ugly head of Fuzz with her slender hand. "Didn't it ever occur to you that you might have been mistaken?"

"Mistaken!" he echoed contemptuously. "Where's your husband, Jem Basseter? And wasn't that yer kid.—er—your child,—that I saw in your arms back at the station?"

The girl laughed. "Jem Basseter married my sister, and that was her 'kid' you saw in my arms. He and his mother are returning home with me for a visit."

"But I saw in the pa—" he began stubbornly.

"Yes, I know," she broke in. "It was a mistake in print. As it was Tessie instead of Bessie, you see the mistake wasn't a very bad one after all."

"I don't see how it could have been worse," muttered Greeny, remembering the pain it had cost him. Suddenly he asked eagerly, "And you, Bess?"

"Oh, I'm still Bess Allen," she admitted with a droll little laugh.

As the train backed cautiously into the mouth of a dark tunnel, Fuzz suddenly found his position rather crowded and, with a protesting whine, vacated the seat and curled up on the car floor at his master's feet.

When No. 8 ground to a pause on the siding at Harper to allow the wrecking crew to pass, Greeny climbed to the ground. "And you'll wait, Bess?"

The girl in the car door gave Fuzz a last, loving pat as he sprang down beside his master. "Sure I'll wait. And you'll make good?"

"Sure I'll make good."

The engineer leaned from the cab window. "Hey, bo! I'll give you a one spot for that hound." Greeny turned and shook his head. Then he went on. The morning breeze wafted a wisp of straw-colored hair gently back and forth above his crownless derby.

Two hours later, the two paused on the outskirts of the town. And seating himself on a fallen log, Greeny took Fuzz's head between his two hands and gently wagged it back and forth.

"Fuzz, old dawg! I guess this is our last mulligan. We're goin' back to work and be respectable once more. The agent at the employment office said our man would be round at ten. I'm goin' to pitch hay, while you watch his sheep. We've just got to do it, Fuzz, 'cause there's a girl waitin'; waitin' for us to make good. Get me? But say, Fuzz! I just knew all along that you was some dawg, and you sure did pull off somethin'—somethin' grand." Fuzz whined gently and licked his master's grimy hand.

THE SCRATCHED RECORD

BY GRACE VAN BRAAM GRAY

It is annoying to have a raven come in at the window, perch on the bust of Pallas, and croak "Nevermore" repeatedly; but it is no worse than having the persistent wail of a cracked phonograph record float through the window night after night. One can at least throw a shoe at the bird.

WITH A yawn that ended in an imprecation, Dallas swung himself to a sitting posture on the edge of the bed and peered at the cheap alarm clock ticking on the bureau.

"Ten minutes past two," he grumbled. "The idea of any infernal fool running a phonograph at this hour on the hottest night of the year!"

Blinking sleepily, he sat for a moment listening, as the distant notes swelled into the familiar strains of "Kathleen Mavourneen."

"Good record," he admitted grudgingly, but even as he spoke the voice broke raucously. For a moment it became a mere confused blare of sound, then fell to silence;—a silence so tense and so full of expectancy that it drew Dallas almost unwittingly to the window.

Across his shoulders, his pajamas clung to the firm young muscles, and his face was beaded with perspiration, but there was more of resignation than of protest in the gaze he flung at the low-hanging clouds. After all, when a man's winter engagement has ended with Lent, and the weeks have dug deeply into a slender bank account, weather doesn't matter much when an eight weeks' stock engagement is offered. So it was less the heat than a sense of something impending—of waiting, for what he could not have told—that kept him leaning from the window until slowly, but with an intensity almost shrill, the song began again.

"Ah-h!" It was not an exclamation of annoyance, but rather one of welcome to the expected, but it drowned the sound of a light tap on his door and he did not turn until it was opened and Everard, the "character man" of the company came in carrying a thermos bottle and two glasses.

"I didn't think you would be able to sleep," he said, with a geniality that sounded forced, "so I brought a nice, cool drink in to you."

"You'll certainly go to heaven," said Dallas with fervor. "But it's not the heat so much as it is that phonograph. People ought to be arrested for running a thing like that with a scratched record in the middle of the night."

"Oh, the phonograph!" said Everard, oddly. His hand suddenly wavered, spilling a thin trail of liquid on to his bare ankles. "Yes—of course—the phonograph."

"You've heard it then?"

"Yes, I—I had this room before you came. I—moved on account of it. It doesn't bother many people because it is only poor devils of players or night workers who are awake to listen." He held out a glass to Dallas and the latter, taking it with a thirsty exclamation of delight, lifted it to his lips, but Everard took his up more slowly.

"Here," he said, still in that queer tone, "is to the voice of the broken record."

"Here's to the hope that it may break entirely," retorted Dallas, and as if his words were magic, the song stopped with a sound that was almost a cry.

Both men paused, and there was something so eery in the silence that Dallas shivered and put his glass down hastily as he whispered:

"There it is again—the—the bad place."

"Yes, the bad place," echoed Everard; then impulsively he leaned forward and

laid his hand on the arm of his companion.

"Look here Dal, you and I have played together in different companies for five seasons. You know I'm not given to hitting them up, and that I haven't the imagination of a scene shifter, don't you?"

"I surely do," said Dallas.

"Well then, let me tell you that that record has got me! It haunts me! I'm as jumpy as a woman with neurasthenia, because I tell you—*it doesn't break in the same place twice!* A record is as cut and dried as a legal document. Any old record will make a queer sound over a bad spot, but it is always the same spot—*and this isn't.* Sometimes the song goes all the way to the end, magnificently; sometimes it breaks in the first stanza—and—it always begins again, with the opening bars. The worst of it is *I know the voice.* I tell you I *know* the voice. It calls to me as a friend, but I can't answer. I don't know where it is—or who— It's just a loose voice that comes at this time of night, and my God, man, it's a song of agony. Sometimes it is as if the soul were being drawn out of the body. Sometimes it is defiant, but it is always that song; always that infernal, 'Da dee, de da dum, the grey dawn is breaking.' I tell you it's driving me insane."

Dallas stared at Everard, his eyes wide, his face a little pale.

"Have you any theory?" he asked breathlessly, and the other nodded:

"I have. But everyone would say I was a damned fool, and I couldn't *prove* anything. I—I wish you were game enough to go with me and find out." He hesitated, and Dallas swallowed hard.

"I'm pretty game, Ev."

Without a word, the older man got up and padded in his bare feet to the window, and with a jerk of his head summoned Dallas.

"The voice was loud tonight, wasn't it?" he whispered. "You could get the words plainly, couldn't you?"

"Sure."

"Well—and why? Because the wind is southeast. When we have a strong west wind it is faint; same when it is north. Then it is positive that the voice or record is somewhere to the south or east, isn't it?"

Dallas nodded, and Everard, putting his hand on the other's shoulder pointed to a dark and gloomy pile looming up across the little splotches of back yards.

"The Cosmopolis Opera House is southeast!" Dallas laughed out loud. "Shades of the symphonies and Wagner," he mocked, "is some watchman running a phonograph in the sacred precincts of the prima donnas?"

"No," said Everard, and his voice was husky; "there is a watchman there, an old man who has been there thirty years, but he doesn't keep a phonograph—because—because— That is not a record I tell you, but a voice,—a voice shut up in the Opera House calling—to me, perhaps, or to you—and I tell you Dal, it's got me. It's got me, and I'm going to answer. Alone if I must, with you if you will come?"

"Come—come where?"

"Into that Opera House now, this very night, while the voice is singing. We can get in through a little window on the side. I swear to you that if we lose that voice once we are inside the building, I'll come back. But I've got to know if the voice is there; I've *got* to know. Will you come?"

"Of course," said Dallas flatly; and they shook hands on it.

"Fine," said Everard. "Put on your shoes and a raincoat over your pajamas. I'll get a flashlight and be with you in a minute."

Shivering a little with excitement, Dallas drew on a few clothes and thrust a box of matches into his pocket, just as Everard returned, swathed in a dark raincoat, and together they went swiftly down the stairs, through the kitchen with its stale odors, and out into the back yard.

Dallas, unused to the intricacies of city gardens, choked himself upon the clothesline, and crushed three flower pots under foot with what seemed a hideous noise, before his eyes became accustomed to the gloom and enabled him to follow the

swifter Everard across the square of green and behind the dusty bushes to the high board fence.

"Put your foot on the handle of the gate and you can swing up more easily," whispered Everard. "Better not try to stand erect. We've got to crawl a few feet to reach the fire-escape of the school next to the Cosmopolis."

With a boyish thrill of excitement and a strong desire to laugh, Dallas did as he was bidden, and in a few moments the two stood on the fire-escape within easy reach of a narrow window in the next building, which was open top and bottom, as if for ventilation. There Everard turned and gripped his companion fiercely by the arm.

"The voice is there," he whispered; "listen!"

"It may be for years and it may be forever," wailed the voice in a great breathy whisper, that seemed incredibly close yet muffled as if by distance. Then came the break and a sobbing cry, "God—God—God!"

For a moment the two men stood as if frozen, then Everard said quietly, as if to some unseen listener:

"It's all right; I'm coming." With that he swung one foot over the sill of the little window.

Inside the Opera House it was very dark and they could hear a rat scuttle across the marble corridor, somewhere near them.

"Do we go up or down?" whispered Dallas, and Everard answered promptly:

"Down. Where is that flash?"

Cautiously, Dallas sent the long ribbon of light leaping before them, and they saw that they were in the corridor back of the upper boxes. As silently as two ghosts, they slipped down the winding stairs; past boxes, down another flight, then Everard took the lead back toward the stage.

"There's nothing in the front of the house of course. It will be back, I—" he broke off abruptly and his groping fingers gripped Dallas's arm so tightly that the hand of the latter relaxed its hold upon the flash and left them in the darkness.

"Listen!"

With the slow, gasping breath of men concentrating upon one of the five senses, they stood motionless. The voice had ceased, but gradually there crept through the silence, a whispering wave of sound, —a sound that was like the slow rhythmic sweep of women's gowns, or the echo of a storm that approaches but never arrives.

"Dear Father in heaven!" gasped Dallas. "What is it?"

"I don't know, but we'll find it. It's here—it's all around. It's sound conceived in silence. Damn you! Where's that flash?"

The trembling fingers of the younger man found the little spring and again the ribbon of light wavered along the corridor. With the first movement that elusive whispering left them—drowned even in their cautious footsteps as they opened door after door and peered in expectantly.

But the light showed nothing but electric switches, piled up cleaning apparatuses and old programs, so it was with careless hands that they thrust open the last door, only to fall back from its threshhold as wailing, moaning, a great sobbing cry rose to them, followed by a soft, steady swishing as of a multitude of silken garments.

The flash now revealed a narrow flight of steps leading downward. Again Dallas's fingers relaxed, and the two men stood in the heavy almost sentient darkness, hands gripping, shoulder to shoulder—listening. And still the low, sobbing moan continued with the steady swish, swish of the silken robes.

"Come on!" Neither man was conscious of having spoken, but at the words they moved involuntarily down the stairs. The waves of sound seemed to rise and envelop them as they descended, but they didn't hesitate, and when this time the flash showed them a low wooden door, they moved towards it with one accord and flung it open, stopping with a simultaneous cry as the light suddenly shivered into a thousand prismatic rays and the rhythmic sound rushed forward and engulfed them.

Then Everard gave a hysterical gasp of relief.

"Pair o' fools," he gurgled. "Damned fools! This is the clean air stunt. The moan is the ventilator sucking air, and this is the water that washes it. It got a full page in the papers when they put it in. The air runs in special corridors all under the house. It's all right,—come on. It's all right, I tell you."

Dallas laughed too, but uncertainly and, turning the light again, flung a marvelous jeweled shimmer across the great sheet of water falling so steadily and gorgeously in that empty place.

"Queer thing," he said slowly, "to use electricity and water to wash the air for a closed building. Does it always run—this way?"

"No. No, you are right." The voice of the other was hoarse with excitement. "Somebody is here who has to have fresh air. It's the voice man,—the voice,—and we're going to find it."

Still moving softly, though the rushing water drowned all other sounds, they passed through into a corridor, the cool, fresh air revealing the fact that they were in one of the ventilating passages. It curved ahead of them into the heart of the building and they followed it without question till they saw another door, from beyond which there arose suddenly the quavering tones of a woman's voice:

"Mavourneen, Mavourneen, my sad tears are falling,
To think that from Erin and thee I must part."

"I knew it,—I knew it!" cried Everard, triumphantly, and the two men creeping forward, crouched against the door and listened as the song broke off and a bitter sobbing filled the echoing spaces around them.

"I won't! I won't! I won't!" wailed a voice. "Oh, kill me and be done with it!"

"No, no, you shall not die," answered a deeper voice. "A thousand times you shall sing it and then you shall die. Did you not say to me, 'Michael, my dear, every night will I sing Kathleen for you—a thousand times you shall hear it if you like?' Now you shall sing it. All those thousand times,—then I will kill you."

"Oh, Michael, Michael, have you no mercy?" cried the woman's voice, and the man's voice answered:

"None. For fifteen years I have sat and waited,—waited for you to come. I knew you would—it had to be—and now you shall sing for me, as befits you,—only for me. Sing it again I tell you—now—now—*now!*" His voice rose harsh and insistent and the woman moaned, but high and gloriously sweet for all its undernotes of agony the strains of Mavourneen rang out again and stealthily Everard forced open the door and peered into the room beyond.

It appeared to stretch endlessly away into darkness, but at one side a lantern stood at the edge of what looked like a huge pool of blackness in the floor. Crouched beside it and peering down at something that they could not see, was a grey-haired man, his face distorted with a dozen conflicting emotions in which cruelty predominated.

"We will take him from each side," whispered Everard coolly, his mouth close to the ear of his companion, his excitement abated. "She must be down in that blackness. Now—one, two, *three!*"

The last word rang out like a clarion, and at its sound the old man leaped to his feet but the others were on him in an instant, and silently struggling, battling and clawing, the three men rolled and fought in the dusty blackness, while from the woman came a sobbing cry and a reiterated:

"Oh God,—at last—at last!"

At length, with a grunt of satisfaction, Everard sat triumphantly on the back of his prostrate victim.

"There is a length of clothes-line in my left-hand pocket Dal," he said cheerfully; "get it and truss up this fellow."

Awkwardly Dallas obeyed, and the old man sitting up, glared mutely at his captors, who turned towards that pool of blackness.

"Where are you?" called Everard, and now his voice shook.

"Here, gentlemen—here! Oh, thank God you have come at last. In the pit—in the pit—be careful not to fall."

It was a voice whose sweetness thrilled both men, and it echoed and reverberated with a sonority that was almost startling.

"In the well," he ejaculated, "the famous sounding well under the stage! My heavens, how did anyone get down there?"

"He let me down on a rope," cried the sweet voice. "Oh, in pity's name get me out quickly. He has a ladder there, gentlemen; he tantalizes me with it. Oh, there in a corner you will find it. Oh, hurry! hurry!"

There was a note of hysteria in the voice and Everard and Dallas stumblingly obeyed. When they finally located it and thrust it carefully down into that well of darkness that lay unfenced and extending vastly into the shadows, the ladder seemed to become alive in their hands so eagerly was it seized from below. Almost before it could be steadied in fact, two slender hands appeared out of the gloom, then a face. Such a face! A pair of white shoulders smeared and grimed, arose, spectre-like, from the darkness.

They saw the tattered remnants of a magnificent evening gown and jewels shimmering amid the dust, and though the exquisite face was streaked with tears, Everard knew her; Dallas too, for that matter, since her picture had been in the papers for weeks.

"Madame de Vesin!" they cried in unison, starting back. Then came to them the remembrance of the strange disappearance of the great singer while her admiring friends thronged the dressing-room and her waiting host sat in the limousine at the stage door. And here she was—a resurrected ghost—emerging in the dark hour before dawn, out of that hideous well of blackness.

"Madame! Madame!" It was all Everard could find voice for, and she could only cling to his hands and sob. They were startled by a sneering laugh.

"Madame, Madame," mocked the old man. "'Tis no madame you are talking to, but my wife. Ask her—ask her—if it ain't so?"

"Oh, I never denied it," she flung back at him, loosing her hands from Everard's. "I never denied it. I married you and I'd do it again—to win my chance, just as I'd leave you again when my art needed me. I married him," she went on, turning piteously to Everard, "when I was sixteen because he, and he alone, could gain for me an entrée behind the scenes here,—a chance to sing for them—the great ones. They heard me and the rest all the world knows! For fifteen years I have lived in my art and for my art. I thought he, my husband, must be dead, so at last I came here to sing. When the concert was over a note was brought to me saying that one of the theatre men wished to see me a moment; he had a message. On my way to the motor I stopped. It was a trap. He dragged me here,—gagged me and oh, my God, here he has kept me! They searched, but he lied. He said he had sat there by the door and no one had passed.

"He has fed me like a beast in the zoo—and always at night he has forced me to sing! To sing—sing—sing!" Her voice rose in a shrill sob and the old man laughed again.

"I am your husband," he repeated parrot-like; "these fools cannot take you away from me. You shall sing for me a thousand times."

"He's crazy," said Dallas. "Maybe I had better get a policeman." But the woman caught at his sleeve.

"No! no!" she wailed. "Not the police—think of the publicity,—of the trial perhaps. No, no, gentlemen, this you shall do for me. Somewhere he keeps a dress and a hat. I might have them he said when I went home with him. Get me those—and set me free. I have money—jewels. I will take a train somewhere—anywhere, it doesn't matter where. Then *voila*,—tomorrow Madame de Vesin will awake; Madame the victim of aphasia will recover. She will telegraph her manager—cash some checks,—send for her maid, and her two very good friends here. And we will forget—this!"

"You are right of course," said Everard quickly. "We'll find you the dress, then Dallas shall take you to the station. My

duty lies here. At five o'clock I shall set him free." He gave a nod towards the old man and repeated: "Free. You will be gone then,—gone to your art—forever."

Dallas, dressing briskly after the matinee, hurried whistling, down the stairs from his dressing room, only to be halted by the sight of an exclamatory group huddled over an evening paper.

"Madame de Vesin has been found," shrilled Miss Rainery, the leading lady. "She had aphasia. It is a lot more exclusive than appendicitis nowadays. She has turned up in a little town in New Jersey. It's the greatest story you ever saw as a press yarn. Some people surely do have all the luck."

Dallas, leaning over her shoulder, was arrested by another item.

"What is that next to it?" he asked.

"Oh that?"—her voice was vague and indifferent,—"some old man—a watchman at the Cosmopolis killed himself last night. Um—um—been with them thirty-two years. Well, it's time he ended it. But just think of that singer! Why, it has been almost three months!"

Above the heads of the group, Dallas met the eyes of Everard and what he saw in them made something prickle along his spine—and he wondered—he wondered.

The Black Cat Club

(*Continued from page 2*)

The situation in *The Mixed Quartette* is humorous, and the atmosphere is good; but the story is weakened by a sort of epilogue. It might well have ended with "'Uh-huh,' I says and kissed her again." Another bad feature is that some of the illustrations used, as for instance the allusion to the "busted garter" are not essential to the progress of the story but seem to have been captured in the store-house of the author's memory, bound hand and foot, and tossed helpless into the tale.

There is entertainment to be found in *The Evidence in the Case*, if one survives the long introduction; for one may find both charming character drawing and a novel situation with a pleasing solution.

Conscience Stuff for Two has the whole stock cast of melodrama without the compensating thrills. Its greatest appeal is to the desire for poetic justice, which is a fundamental characteristic of most people. The property pieces, pipe and can, are worked in cleverly.

The five dollar prize winners in the third contest were: Roy H. Fricken, Ann Arbor, Mich.; Mrs. A. M. Scruggs, Selma, Ala.; Willes W. Hackmann, Bridgeport, Conn.; Elliot Field, Cleveland, Ohio; and J. Willard Ridings, Columbia, Mo.

The Sixth Contest comprises the stories in this issue, (May); and all lists must be received at the office of THE BLACK CAT, Salem, Mass., before June 1st. Prizes will be awarded June 10th; and the result of the contest will be announced in the August BLACK CAT, issued July 15th.

A PRIZE OF $25 will be awarded to the author of the story which is selected as the best story of the month by the largest number of club members.

PRIZES OF $5 EACH will be awarded to the five members submitting the best criticisms.

A copy of THE BLACK CAT should be obtainable at any news stand, or it will be mailed to any address on receipt of ten cents. Members will find it to their advantage to become regular subscribers. The subscription price is one dollar per year. Any club member sending two yearly subscriptions will receive the magazine for one year free.

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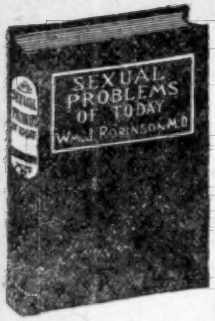

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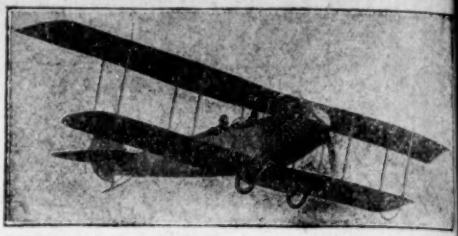

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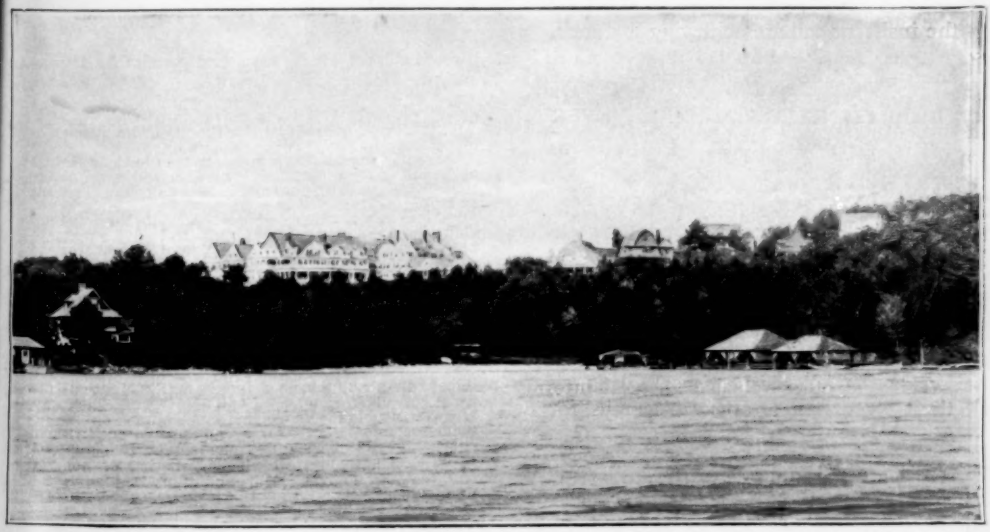

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